

SIGHT & SOUND

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ARTICLES

Vermouth, Vodka and
Beer

Pity the Poor Fish!

Our Picture Show

A New Egyptian Film

These Religious Pictures

Buried Alive!

The Laughter of the Gods

Censor the Censor!

Film Crossword

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BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

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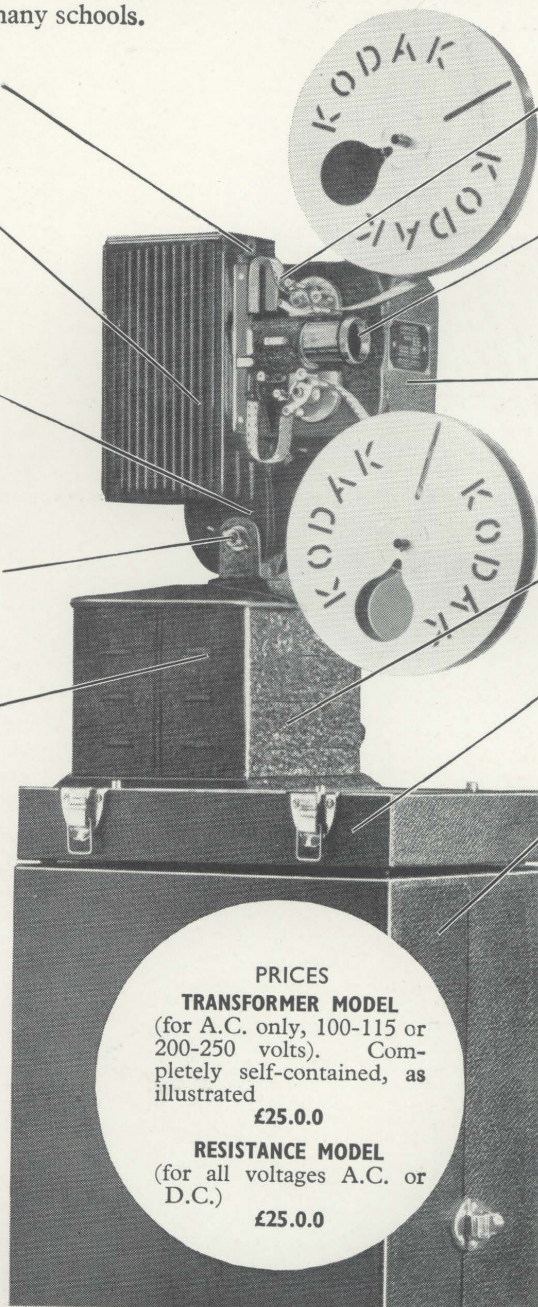
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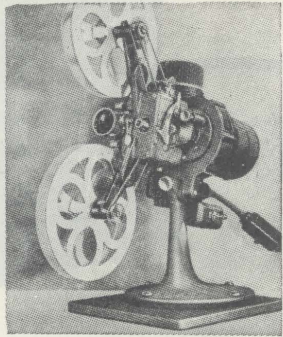
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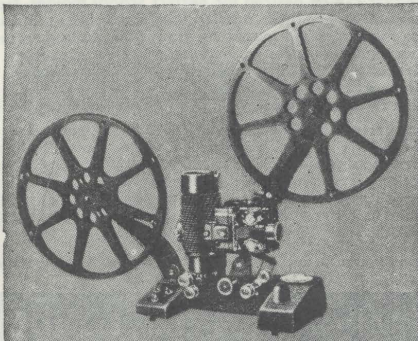


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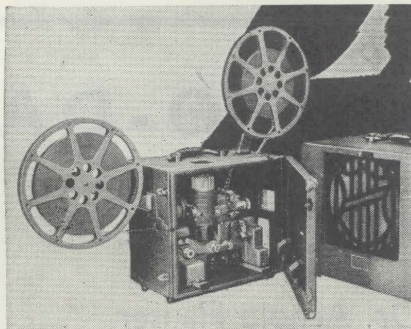


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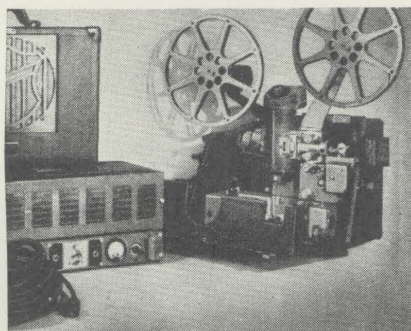


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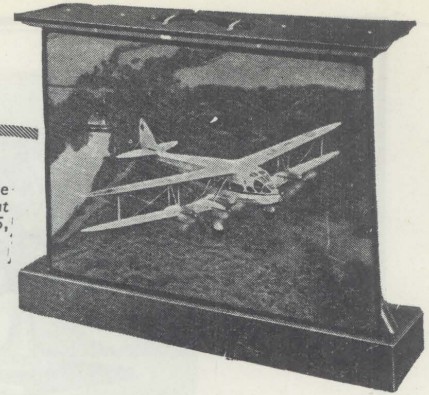
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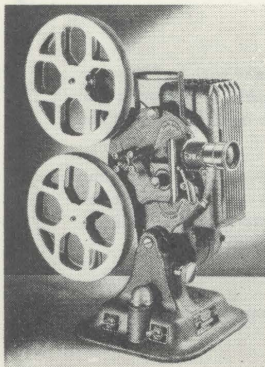
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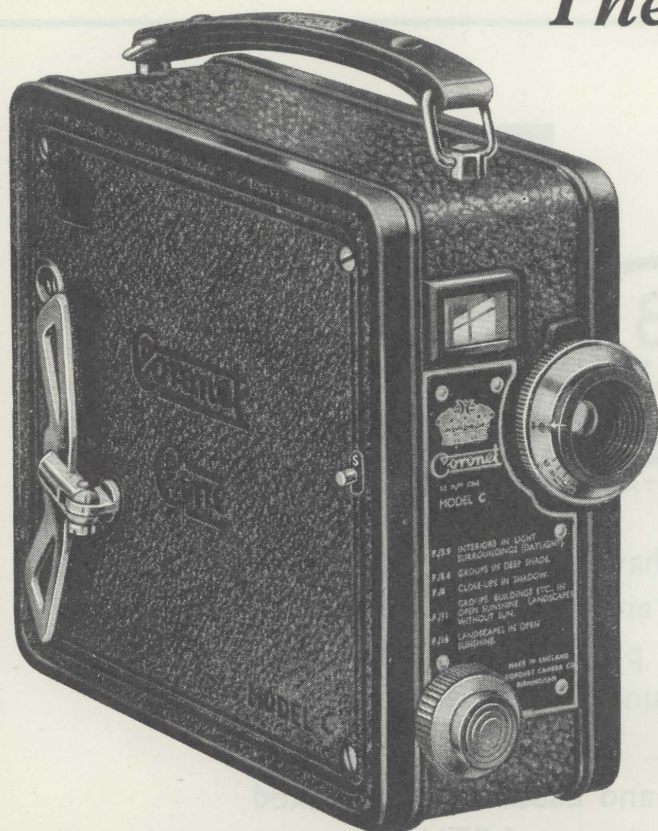
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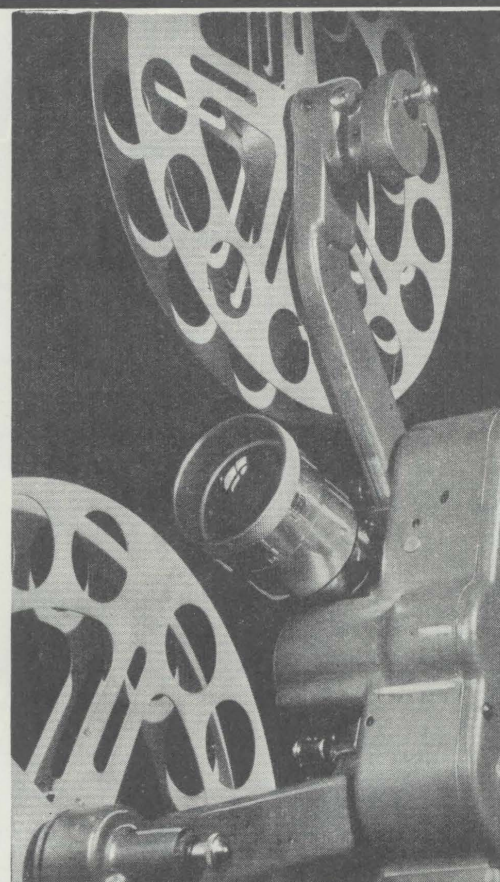
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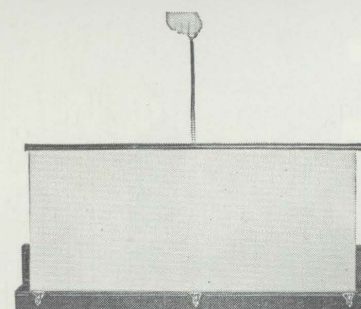
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DIRECTOR—DONALD CARTER

(Gaumont British Instructional) Commentator—Julian Huxley

Mr. Julian Huxley explains the three rules of good feeding by means of cartoon figures of Mr. Builder, Mr. Policeman and Mr. Stoker. These represent the body-building, protective and energy foods. The film points out not only the importance of a balanced meal but also how the above rules can be put into practice. The last section illustrates the best methods of cooking. Mr. Kenneth Lindsay, M.P., sums up on behalf of the Board of Education.



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Director—Frank Sainsbury

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MUSIC

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Associate Director—Pat Jackson

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COVER STILL: *The Cowboy and the Lady*

TO READERS

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The committee decided

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A decision that is being approved by one committee after another. Educational authorities, members of institutes, organisers of cine clubs, etc., after exhaustive tests of apparatus, are "signifying in the usual manner" their confidence in Bell and Howell equipment.

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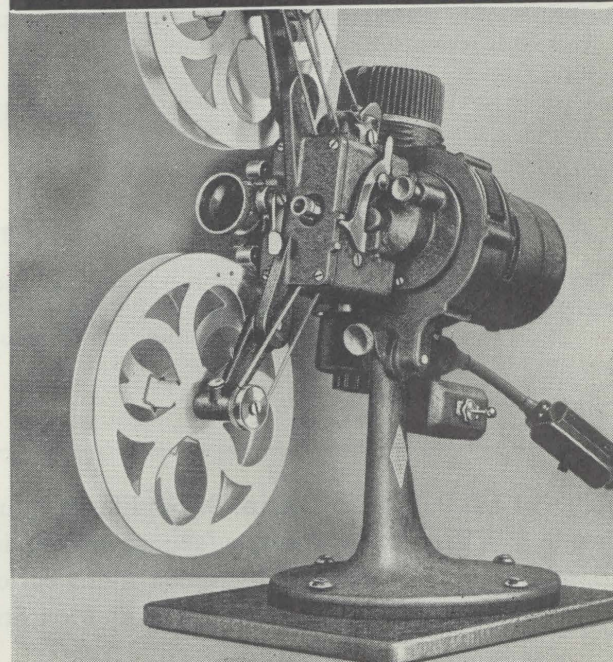
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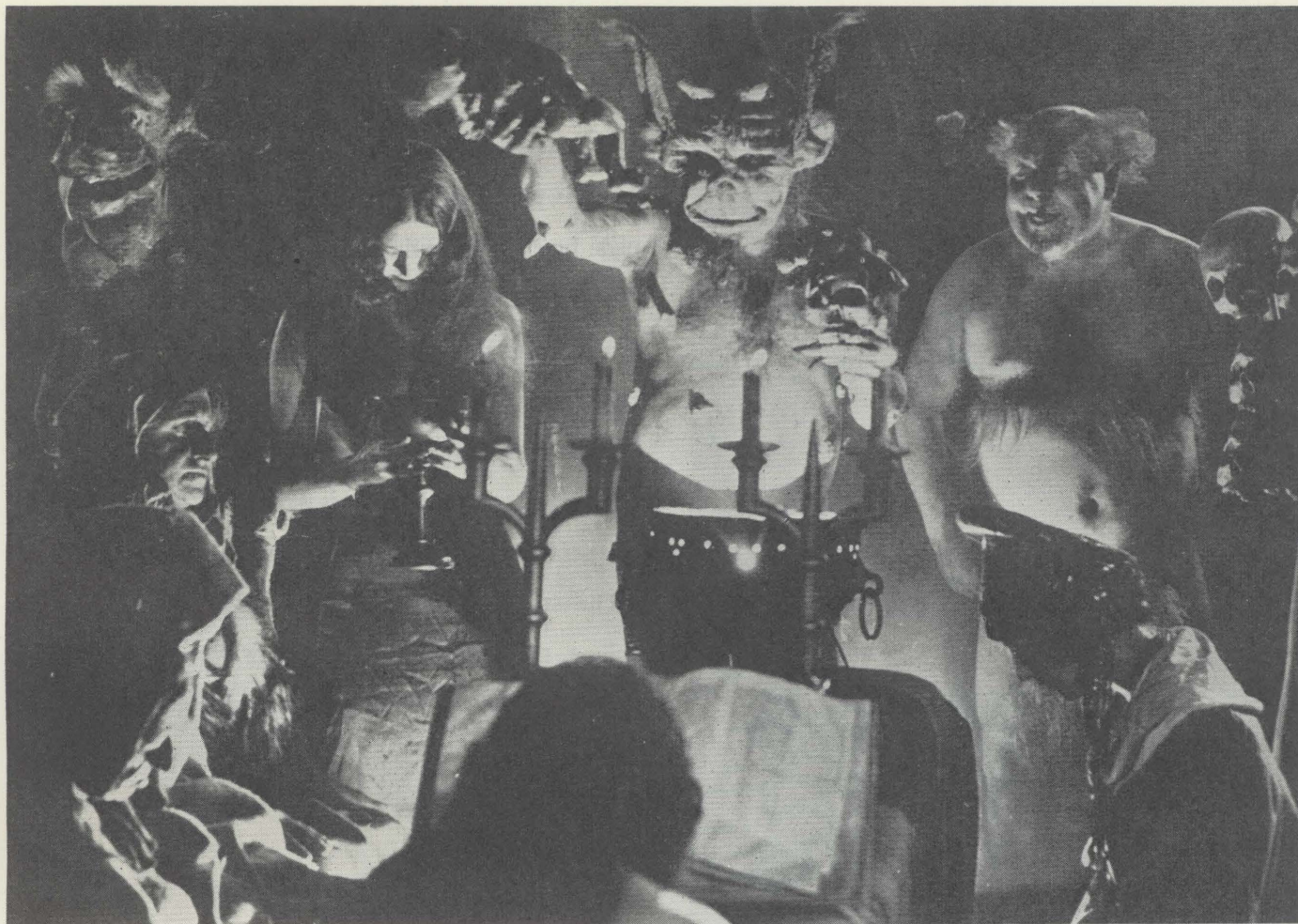
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Haxan (the Witch) (Sweden, 1922). From the stills presented to the National Film Library.

NATIONAL FILM LIBRARY

APART FROM THE non-recurrent grant of £3,000 given by the Privy Council out of the Cinematograph Fund, perhaps the most important stage in the development of the National Film Library during the last quarter has been the appointment of a Selection Committee under the chairmanship of Mr. A. C. Cameron. The work of the Committee, which consists principally of members of the film industry, is to select films, both old and new, to be preserved by the Library, especially as illustrating the technique and development of the cinema.

Meanwhile films still continue to be added to both Preservation and Loan Sections. Amongst contemporary films *Dead End* has been presented by Mr. Sam Goldwyn through United Artists, and *Confession* by Warner Brothers. Amongst earlier films the Library has acquired a copy of *Masks and Faces* featuring many well-known stage actors and dramatists, presented on permanent loan by the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, and *General Allenby's Entry into Palestine*, presented by the Research Laboratories of the General Electric Company. Twenty-three films have been added to the Loan Section. Eight are reprints from the Preservation Section: three Méliès films, *The Conjuror*, *Conquest of the Pole* and *Voyage Across the Impossible*; *Would-Be*

Juggler, with Max Linder; the first pure animated cartoon, *Drame Chez les Fantoques*, by Emile Cohl; an early comedy, *The Well-Washed House*, and Mr. Adrian Brunel's satire on censorship, *Cut it Out*. Perhaps the most interesting of the historical films acquired, however, are copies of *Metropolis* and *The Last Laugh*, purchased from the Museum of Modern Art, New York; in addition a composite film on the early work of Chaplin, compiled by Mr. H. D. Waley, has been added. Among the general and educational films added to the Loan Section may be mentioned Pare Lorentz's new documentary film *The River*; a League of Nations film, *Struggle for Life*, which is especially useful for French language teaching, and two films presented by Mr. Fairgrieve, *Spinning* and *Norway*. The Loan Section, incidentally, is being increasingly used, approximately twice as many films being borrowed at the present time as at the corresponding period last year.

Through the courtesy of Svensk Filmindustri and its London agent, Mr. Cattermoul, a comprehensive collection of Swedish stills covering the period between 1909 and 1933 has been added to the Library's ever-growing collection of stills.



“ LASHEEN ”

Egypt is proud of its new £20,000 historical film *Lasheen*, made by the Misr Film Company and recently shown in Cairo after a mysterious ban by the Government. Also just completed is a documentary, *Holy Places of Islam*, made with the co-operation of King Ibn Sa'ud. It is hoped that a version of this film will be seen later in England. The following illustrated account is written by "A.P. PARKER," the pseudonym of a well-known journalist living in Egypt.

The stills on this page, show (left) Nadia Nagy as Kalima, the Harem girl, and (below) the Sultan (Hassan Riad) playing chess with Lasheen, commander of the Army (Hassen Ezzet).



WHEN THE NEW Arabic film *Lasheen* opened recently in Cairo, it must have felt like going into first long pants for the Egyptian film industry, with some growing pains thrown in.

Getting to the picture house for the premiere was a struggle, even for a pedestrian. As for cars, the traffic jam was Cairo's worst since the Coronation. Occasionally there are traffic jams in Cairo, little ones with twenty trams standing end to end and a hundred screaming cars huddled all around. This is because a barrow-load of *youssef effendi* has overturned—that's the picturesque local name for home-grown tangerines, which is like calling a Californian orange *Mr. Ford* or an English tomato *Mr. Churchill*. The point duty policeman joins in to help pick up the fruit and passers-by give a hand. Traffic is held up for a hundred yards, but this is not called a jam by the police. It is just an accident.

This jam was a good one. Every nose, man's or car's, was turned towards Studio Misr Cinema, recently taken over by Misr Film Co., which has produced *Lasheen*, shown at last after an eight-month ban by the Government.

It's an ill wind. . . . Nobody knew why the film was banned, as the authorities, canny in these things, never committed themselves so far to give a reason. It just said "No" and sat back. Of course, tongues wagged like palm branches in a *khamseen* sandstorm. Everybody knew the reason, especially the people who had never seen an inch of the film, which means practically everybody. In eight months there was time to add a foot to every story and by the time the film was shown, excitement and conjecture had reached fever pitch. It also meant that instead of putting a few two-piastre bits into the Bank Misr money-box (which an American journalist recently called the film company's bankroller and sugar-daddy, and that is what the Bank has been until now) it will now swell the Bank's wad until the manager will have to keep it in a safe instead of carrying it about with him.

"PLAYING BLOCKS"

The Bank will have to change its attitude to the studios. Hitherto, standing in gleaming white loneliness in green maize and sugar-cane fields, well away from the city and close to that famous ancient-and-modern combine, the Mena House Hotel and the Pyramids of Giza, they have been regarded rather as a show place for friends, an outside set of children's playing blocks for the Bank's nursery. Now the studios will have to come out of the nursery into the "Here We Work" department, like the Bank's shipping line, its homespun cloth factory and in fact practically every industry possessed by Egypt that is not foreign-owned.

The ban jerked the people no end. Since what rank as "early silent" days in Egyptian film history (that's about eleven years ago), there have been something like forty films. Two have been ambitious productions, outstanding by local standards, *Leila, the Desert Girl* and *Wedad the*

Slave, the latter being Misr Company's first talkie effort and Fritz Kramp's first directorial job for Misr in 1935. Since then *Wedad* has gone the round of the Near East Arabic world, and it was shown in London in a mercilessly cut version which made a critic utter the cryptic sum-up, "They say it is the first Arabic talking film. It looks like it."

Apart from the mistake of calling *Wedad* the first Arabic talkie (it was only Misr's first), that opinion failed to take account of the fact that an Arabic talking film is made for Arabic-speaking people, which severely limits its director's chances of making it a good film judged by Western standards. The film was a success in the Near East and just prevented the pile of playing blocks at Giza from being knocked down to make room for a new toy.

At the same time it opened the eyes of Egyptians to something. So far they had seen in the pictures produced in the dilapidated junk-yards called film studios in Egypt only pleasant, harmless home movies to be shown to friends, the cost in the case of the more expensive ones to be written in red ink on the wrong side of the ledger as a sort of expensive hobby. After *Wedad* the home-made film charade was seen to have money in it. A spot of national pride entered into the business too.

A SYMPHONY OF EGYPT

So Misr Film Company went right in to make a great Egyptian film. Truly Egyptian. Speech, tempo, costume, lighting, style, theme, architecture, actors, even politics (twelfth-century politics), everything Egyptian. It was a tall order. It meant having expert designers, a first-rate architect (Robert Scharfenberg, once with Lubitsch in his pre-Hollywood days), special men for research into records for authentic twelfth-century costume, armour and architecture and an expert cameraman. Especially a cameraman, able to find a new kind of lighting for a story with many scenes in chiaroscuro suitable for dark ages in the East, suddenly emerging into Egypt's brilliant sun (it has made many expert foreign cameramen, sent out to make local scenes, come a cropper). Georges Stilly was brought from France to photograph the film and he has found a new style in light and shade, a sort of pale grey and deep black symphony of an Egypt of 700 years ago.

Fritz Kramp, who had made *Wedad*, was given the job of directing *Lasheen*. He was trained in Germany and was with Tobis from its pre-Tobis days until 1929 when it made *The Last Company* with Conrad Veidt. Then he worked in Belgian and French films and again in Germany before coming to the well-equipped but otherwise unused studios of Misr Film Company in 1935.

If any British or American director thinks he has a tough job of direction, it will do him good to think of Fritz Kramp's job. All the ordinary worries of a film director to begin with. On top of these, a few more. Inexperience all around him—all his crowds were illiterate *fellaheen* (poor land workers) herded into the studios every morning from

the surrounding fields and even his artists, with few exceptions, were either raw beginners or amateurs. Egypt in the artistic sense is a village and has hardly enough artists to run a single show in town. Then the sun, with its angle vagaries morning and evening in winter and in the midday hours in summer. Then the heat, making everybody, for several months of the year, look as if he had just come out of a Turkish bath. Then the ordinary dilatoriness of local administrative methods and constant trouble with the censor. And not least, Fritz Kramp's ignorance of the Arabic language, especially of the so-called "classical" speech used for dignified court and official scenes. Finally Bank Misr usually generous to a fault in any scheme which may add lustre to Egypt, hesitated to pay for a film, hitherto only a fair pile of two-piastre bits, as much as £E 20,000—a sum fantastically in excess of any normally put into a film in Egypt.

Followed a year's hard work. Finished at last, the film was publicised in all the local papers, advertised in a blaze of neon lights by a man who knew his job, a theatre booked and seats for the opening night sold out. Everything set for a grand opening, when the Government stepped in and banned it. Without a reason or as much as a "We'll pass it if you . . ."

Everybody gasped. People's eyes were opened again.

First the home-made charade had become a maker of money which is a title to almost religious respect in Egypt. Now it was seen to be also that most revered of all forces in the East, a political power. Speculation ran riot. Everybody who had never seen the film said who this or that character in the film represented in the political arena of modern Egypt. Each character became in turn each of Egypt's political leaders. Oddest coincidence of all, events remarkably like those shot in the film in the spring of 1937 actually happened in Egypt in the spring of 1938! The thing was actually prophetic. The fate of the film was sealed. It was banned, apparently for good. The Government's "No," instead of meaning "Perhaps" like the girl's in the story, apparently for once really meant "No."

And then, as suddenly as it was imposed, the ban was lifted. The crush for the premiere was only what was to be expected. Actually, when the film was seen, it turned out to be a well-made historical romance of love and intrigue of the middle ages, with no more connection with modern events than people cared to put into it. A period piece in which history, and especially the East, were for once presented with realism, without the usual historical film histrionics. Such is the natural realism of the film that costume and architecture, although carefully studied, fit unobtrusively into the picture. A clever use of shadows and subdued



A Harem Scene. The Sultan has eyes only for Kalima, his newest acquisition. She, already in love with Lasheen, who brought her back as a trophy of war, does not encourage his advances



Troops returning across the desert. Note the use of natural desert that is totally free from the billowy windswept romantic sands usually shown in such scenes

lighting in certain scenes suggests powerfully the poverty and secret intrigues of the earlier age. Details of local colour and period, although shown, are not allowed to make the action dawdle.

In some ways, *Lasheen* is a reversal of the usual Egyptian procedure. Rapid cutting sounds the death-knell of the interminably long sequences that have disfigured most Egyptian films until now. *Lasheen* was faced with the vexed problem of language. Should it be in "classical" or colloquial Arabic? This is the usual battle of the Classicists versus Modernists in the Moslem World. The film makes a contribution to the discussion by using three forms of speech, classical for dignified scenes, colloquial for scenes using poor people and a middle speech for normal unofficial scenes between educated people. On this score alone, the film must excite comment.

To avoid possible trouble, the management did a cunning thing. It showed a short film called *Holy Places of Islam*. This film is a documentary showing Mecca and other holy places for the first time to the world. It was made by a Misr Company unit which followed the pilgrimage last year. It even has a prologue spoken by King Ibn Sa'ud himself. As no Moslem can harbour a spirit of resentment in an atmosphere of religious reverence for Mecca and its associations, the film was shown first. There was no particular

need to arrange things like this, as *Lasheen* is not a satire on modern politics, but political leaders in the East always believe in making sure when there is a chance of trouble.

Finally, the public, standing in the foyer after the show, was denied its time-honoured demonstration. Normally, every actor appearing in an Egyptian film is so well known that when he appears to take his bow after the opening show, he is greeted with familiar cries, usually by his first name. It is a part of the old home-made family charade tradition. At the opening of *Lasheen*, things were different. Nadia Nagy, who played the harem girl, Kalima, made her first appearance as an actress in this film. Fuad el Rasheedy, who played Kongor, the chief conspirator, is an amateur. *Lasheen*, the commander of the army, was played by Hassan Ezzet, who returned to Egypt from Hollywood just before the film was started. The leader of the starving peasants, Youssef, was played by Ahmed Beh, who had been for some years in German studios and came back to Egypt for this film.

Craning one's neck to see above the sea of red fezes, one saw a crowd subdued into almost silent admiration of artists that for once could not be picked out in the crowd and called by name. Another step in the growth of the Egyptian film industry from the home-made movie charade into a full-fledged art and industry.



The Emperor's Candlesticks

Film Austria

THE LAUGHTER OF THE GODS

The gods, according to an old legend, laugh at the sufferings of mankind. No doubt, therefore, they will chuckle over this account of the tragic end of all that was worthwhile in the Austrian cinema. The author is JOHN H. WINGE, sometime film critic of the "Neue Freie Presse," Vienna, and now a refugee . . .

IN THE AUSTRIA of yesterday there was a small but energetic group struggling for better films, for new points of view in making films. The attempt to concentrate the various activities to unite the movement for starting a real society of interested filmgoers—all this was destroyed with the sudden destroying of Austria herself and her social and cultural life. Thus it is possible now to survey the former situation of the Austrian *avantgarde*.

Vienna was never a good soil for the work of *avant-gardists*. The more conservative character of the public opinion was directed to simple and gay amusements. All the artists such as the painters Klimt and Kokoschka, the composers Mahler, Schoenberg, Alban Berg, the writers and poets Kraus, Altenberg, Trakl, the architects Loos and Wagner have been better understood abroad than in their own fatherland, Austria. *Nemo propheta in patria sua* might have been invented for gay, but superficial Vienna.

The very small film industry of Austria had three studios at its disposal: a little one at Schoenbrunn, a bigger but old-fashioned one at Sievering and the large and quite modern studios at Rosenhügel. The film industry had always worked under difficult conditions. There were not

enough cinemas in the country to make profit for the film-makers, even too few to bring the money back. A picture, made for Austria only, would have been a certain loss to the producer, because the possessor of the sound-patents, the *Tobis-Sascha*, a branch of the German *Tobis*, had the monopoly for Austria and was able to dictate the terms. Under these circumstances you can imagine it could not be cheap to hire the sound-equipments from the *Tobis*. Their enormously high prices made the pictures very expensive.

So the Austrian film-industry was forced to look for a buyer, who could guarantee to make the picture-business profitable. And these buyers were the German distributors. Austrian pictures were made in the German language and the market for these pictures had to be firstly Germany only. A picture, sold to Germany, made money and sale to other countries added to the profit.

Therefore it was clear that the Austrian producer could not work for his country, but only for Germany. Different laws existed there and the German distributor was forced to buy only pictures which did not contradict these ideas. Therefore the Austrian producer made pictures at Vienna which complied exactly with German requirements.

In this way the Vienna studios became Nazi branches. A story was first submitted to the Ministry of Propaganda at Berlin, before the Austrian producer made up his mind to buy it. Furthermore, all the staff, the technicians and the artists, the hairdresser and the little extra, the electrician and the costume-designer, they all were subject to the "racial" conditions of the German "officer-law." That was not enough. The producer had also to pay a delegate of the Ministry of Propaganda at Berlin, who attended all the shots in Austria to make sure that these laws were obeyed. One strange exception was made: the Austrian producer himself and his financial backers were allowed to be Jews.

But production was limited. Germany dictated a certain yearly quota for pictures to be bought from Austria. The number was between 14 and 16 every year. Proceeds from the pictures in Germany were not allowed to be exported owing to the German shortness of foreign money. So the Austrian producers were rich in Germany and poor in Austria. Soon they were so poor, that they had to stop production, because their not too small capital was retained in Germany. At last the Germans arranged for a modest transfer of money to Austria, but not enough to satisfy the producers and to build up the industry again. There were petitions and demands for financial help to the Austrian Government, but Schuschnigg and his collaborators did not do anything. At last the Anschluss solved the grave crisis of the "independent" Austrian film-industry. To-day the Berlin and Munich film companies produce in Vienna quite openly.

Strangely enough—in spite of the fact that the Austrian pictures were made by actors, directors, writers, photographers and architects who came directly from Berlin, there was a certain spirit in them. This spirit could not be oppressed by harsh and military Prussianism. The soft and lovely spirit of Vienna, of Austria crept into the studios and into the pictures. The severe manners of the North-Germans became softened and kind, and in a magic way these rather dry and square Berlin pictures got the genuine Vienna-touch. Thus some pictures could gain fame abroad and Vienna artists like Willy Forst, living at Berlin, could make remarkable films like *Maskerade*, *Burgtheater*, and *Episode*, and Paula Wessely, the only great Vienna actress not forfeited at all to Berlin, could star in some of them.

But generally these Austro-German pictures have been rather bad and the main topics were the *Heurigen* and the *Prater*, forged and sugared without any hesitation. The attempts to start a real independent film-production at Vienna had to fail on account of the high costs. Only the first attempt, *Unfinished Symphony*, could really succeed, because at that time the German formulas about the Jews and their position in the artistic life had not yet been precisely announced.

In this way the Austrian moviegoers had a strange choice. Only a few great cinemas in the city of Vienna could show a picture for one, two or more weeks. The others changed their programmes every Tuesday and Friday. So a great shortage in pictures developed and as there were not enough Austrian or German, American, French and British pictures had to be imported. Nearly as many American and French pictures were imported into the country as German, but it was very difficult to show them everywhere. Only the audience of Vienna, especially of the inner city, was interested to see foreign films. The suburbs and the country itself wanted only German and Austrian pictures and were very distrustful against all pictures in foreign languages. Finally they declined to see pictures with actors whose names were hard to pronounce. They had been designated wrongly as "Bolshevistic" or "Jewish" and pictures like *Victoria the Great* or *These Three* or *Green Pastures* or *La Grande Illusion* or *Carnet de Bal* or *Mr. Deeds goes to Town* have all had the same designation. Having never seen a Bolshevik or a Jew indeed they preferred, powerfully aided by an excellent and generous Nazi-propaganda, German goods and also German pictures.

The audience of Austria was divided by its political opinions and prejudices: the major part wanted German and the "Austrian" German pictures, not concerned with quality, only with the origin; a small section only liked to see the few good German pictures, still more the better foreign, not handicapped by the ignorance of foreign languages. The increasing Nazi-propaganda weakened the position of the foreign films in Austria.

In this way one can understand the particularly difficult conditions for an *avantgarde* of film people. The filmgoers themselves came from not very pretentious ranks. They liked to see the poor girl eventually married to the rich prince or vice versa, played by some popular and beautiful stars. They did not want to see other things. For a long time they did not even ask after the title and cast of any particular film and just went to their local cinema as a habit.

Nevertheless there was a comparatively small proportion of picturegoers wanting better stuff, probably the same type of men who once understood and promoted the art of Kokoschka, Schoenberg, Kraus or Loos. Slowly they began to express their wishes, here and there new demands appeared and on different platforms the struggle for a new and better film in Austria began.

There was a department in the Psychological Institution of the Vienna University, headed by Professor Dr. Karl Buehler, where Dr. Kathe Wolf and her assistants tried to penetrate into the secrets of film psychology by the means of science.

With the little money at his disposal the composer, Max Brand, made some silent shorts trying to find out a

new form, but he remained handicapped by insufficient means and had to stop his experiments too soon.

Similar was the case of Ernst Angel, who produced and directed under great difficulties a half-short (about 4,000 feet) *The Broken Jug* (*Der zerbrochene Krug*) after the famous play by Heinrich von Kleist. Angel also struggled with little money, but his film received a prize in a competition of the Austrian Government. Nevertheless it was never performed in public. The cinema-owners did not like it, because it was too short for a normally long film and too long for a supporting short. Therefore the public performance in Austria was always postponed, only a society of film-friends in Holland and the London Film Society were really interested in seeing this experimental film. The cast included Miss Rose Stradner, who then (1934) got her first big part four years before Hollywood made her famous.

Angel tried later to teach the audience how to see the pictures and listen to them in order to improve its taste. He gave a course of lectures at an evening school at which he showed practical examples, and in this way he interested a lot of picturegoers who had hitherto been indifferent.

From another direction, I myself, as the film-critic of the leading Viennese newspaper, *Neue Freie Presse*, tried to improve the taste of audiences by explaining the technical art, æsthetical and sociological foundations of picture-making and going to them. First I tried to do so only by my criticisms, but in 1936 I started in addition a separate weekly column, devoted only to all the different problems of the gigantic subject: movies and talkies.

This first public platform for the serious discussion of film problems attracted the attention of people who hitherto had not known anything about the subject.

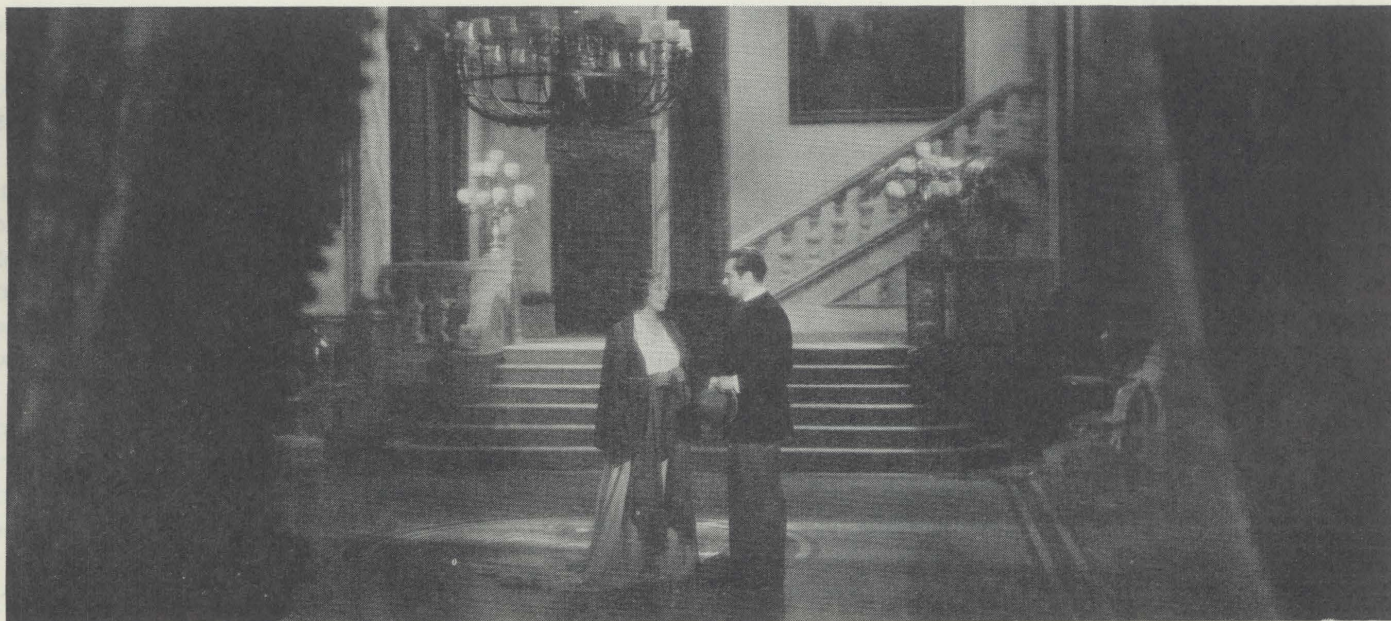
A lively discussion issued from these suggestions, and I was invited by many clubs to speak about individual film-topics. From this finally grew up the idea of founding a society of film-friends.

Angel together with the scientist, Dr. Arnold Hauser, took the first steps for the difficult organisation and an astonishing number of well-known personalities announced their intention to join the committee. The real film-friend, Major Fritz Lahr, vice-mayor of Vienna, became the president, while Professor Buehler and a lot of well-known people of public life took part in the establishment of the company. Very soon hundreds of people became members of the new society in order to have in this manner pictures of special interest that were out of the ordinary.

Angel, indeed, procured interesting films, which were performed twice only for the members. Among the pictures were works by Voscovec and Werich (Czechoslovakia), Ophuels (France), British documentary films, forbidden Americans, all of which were well received by the members.

Dr. Hauser who was writing a book on theory of film drama, lectured to the Society and the discussions showed an increasing interest and understanding on the part of the ordinary cinema-goer. There were not only physicians and lawyers, artists and merchants, students and tutors, but workmen and clerks. All were united by the same interest in the progress of film-art.

A bigger scheme of lectures and discussions was planned, the performance of unknown experimental films by the special Frenchmen, the publishing of a special periodical in connection with the film-column of the *Neue Freie Presse*. All this was planned: however, not only have these attempts perished in the "Anschluss", but much of their precious material has disappeared.



Maria Bashkirtzeff

Sascha

of the English raj. Not for him any Hollywood-manufactured "history." He had his own method of dealing with the parts of the film that offended. It was simple but effective. He just cut them out, and if the film as a whole did happen to bear a disconnected appearance—well, his audience, except for the few Britishers present, never noticed it.

Once they had got over their initial surprise and nervousness, the close-packed onlookers behind the screen enjoyed themselves to their hearts' content. As a commentator we had enlisted the services of the estate conductor, an intelligent South Indian who spoke quite good English. His task was rather a difficult one: that of translating the English captions, etc., into Tamil which the coolies could understand, and at the same time furnishing a running description and explanation of the strange behaviour of the actors. Naturally, to the large majority of the audience who had never before seen a moving picture, it came as a great surprise to witness white men and women carrying on in such manner; indeed, until the commentator explained the mystery, they were dazed, not to say shocked. But the conductor soon put them at their ease. Luckily he possessed a sense of humour coupled with a vivid imagination, two assets which stood him in good stead. Without batting an eyelid he informed the startled company that every actor in the picture was really a coolie, painted and dressed to represent the European! There was not a single *Dore* (Master) or *Mem* in the show. By way of amplification he added that these were specially picked and clever American coolies: did not the fact of their being able to disguise themselves so well prove it? The audience agreed, and all restraint now having been removed, they abandoned themselves to the enjoyment of the entertainment.

Followed a short news-reel, anything but up to date. There was a prize fight not more than six months old, which the audience enjoyed immensely; every blow was hailed with shouts of glee, and when the victor came forward grimacing with satisfaction, even the youngest of the females trilled her appreciation of his valour. This was the stuff! Plenty of action and blows galore! A picture taken in a zoo at feeding time was received with mixed feelings; to the majority—especially the women—the sight of so much good food being *given* to tigers—accursed brutes!—met with plainly-expressed disapproval, while the commentator's explanation that these were pet tigers left them cold: who ever heard of a *tame* tiger? A picture of his Majesty at some public function brought down the house, however, even although they mistook the local mayor for the King—a pardonable mistake, seeing that the latter was dressed in plain morning clothes while the mayor was resplendent in robes and chain of office.

After the news came a short interval devoted to refreshments. The lights went up. Coco-nuts, sugar-cane, sweet cakes, and 'soft' drinks were distributed, and the concourse

proceeded to enjoy itself. On all sides the evening was voted an unqualified success. To lie or squat at ease, watching others labour for their entertainment; to stuff themselves to repletion with all manner of good things; afterwards, when they could eat no more, to chew betel nut and spit to their hearts' content—what more could man (or woman) ask for?

Once more the lights were cut off. Anon came our old friends Laurel and Hardy. Right from the start this picture was received with acclamation, followed, as the story unfolded itself, by shrieks and yells of laughter. Again, it was an old film, but what of it? It was all new to the audience, every member of which followed the adventures of the unique pair with unrestrained gaiety and admiration. Here the commentator was in his element, drawing on his fertile imagination with gusto. Again and again—quite unintentionally, it is true—he was guilty of gross libel on two citizens of a great and friendly nation. His explanation of the disparity in the physical proportions of the two stars, for example, was ingenious and acceptable to the coolies, but hardly compatible with facts. According to him, "Stan" was really a slave of the *peria ambalo* (big man), who ate and drank as much as he could hold while condemning his underling to semi-starvation in order to secure plenty for himself. To the audience, with vivid recollections of their village life in India and the greed of the majority of Indian landlords, this explanation came in the nature of a cold and logical fact.

The next picture was a local one, showing—above all things!—life and work on a rubber estate. But our showman knew his audience: the film afforded the coolies a heaven-sent opportunity of criticising the work of others. Eagerly they fastened on, and exclaimed at, the manner in which certain tasks were being, in *their* opinion, scamped. Actually the work appeared to us to be well up to standard. But no. It did not conform in certain details to the system practised on their own estate. *Ergo*, it was all wrong. Here the commentator took the opportunity of improving the occasion by delivering a many-adjectived eulogium on the manner in which *our* estate was run as compared with that of the one depicted on the screen. Being conductor, responsible for the carrying out of the orders of the European staff, he revelled in his task, his eyes shining in the light of reflected glory. We let him run on; he was a good man at his job, and the coolies enjoyed it.

And now came the final picture—the *pièce de résistance*. Mickey Mouse! He was an almost instantaneous success. Once the audience had got over their surprise at seeing a real, live *sundeli* (mouse) behaving in such an unheard-of manner, they yielded to his blandishments and laughed until the tears rolled down their cheeks. To them Mickey was a living entity, not a cleverly executed series of drawings. Realising that the task of explaining the truth of the matter was quite beyond him, the commentator took

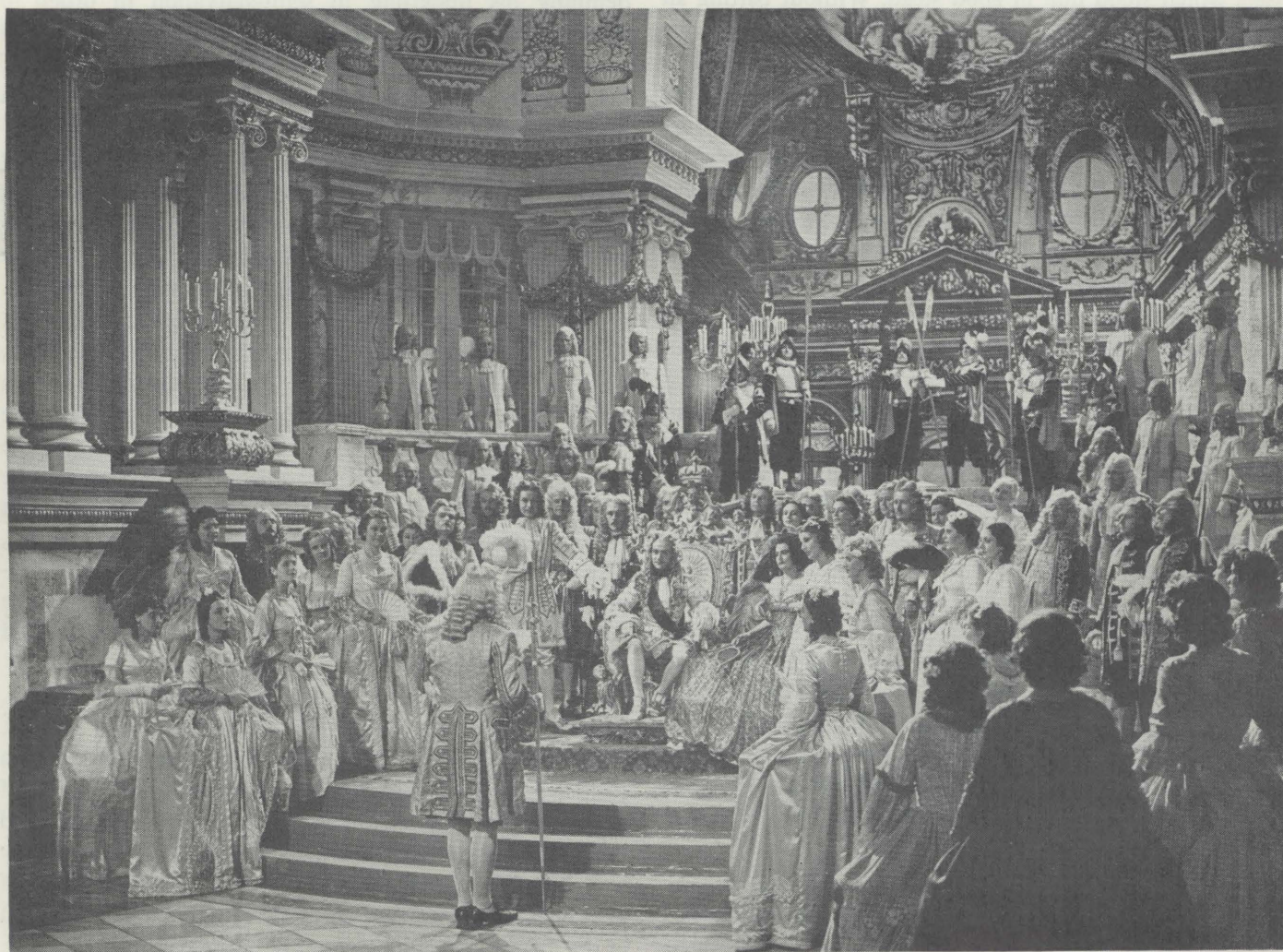
the line of least resistance, and contented himself with drawing liberally on his fertile imagination. Mickey, he explained, was not just an ordinary *sundeli* such as those which formed the main diet of the cats in the coolie lines. He was an English one, the kind of little animal which English children played with and taught to do tricks for their amusement. No *Dore* or *Mem* in England would ever dream of harming, much less killing, the little things. As for the cats, why, they and all the little "Mickies" played together! It was a fact that in England the *Mems* provided choice food for the mice. Even whole cheeses! Had not they just witnessed examples of this lavish hospitality? By the time the commentator had come to an end of his description the English mouse must have been envisaged by the coolies as a kind of a cross between an honoured guest and a court jester.

Even the best of pleasures must come to an end at last. The lights went up with the departure of Mickey Mouse, and the close-packed mass of dusky humanity relaxed itself. But for some reason they did not take their departure as we expected; rather, they appeared to be undecided. Instead of salaaming and leaving in a body, they began to chatter among themselves. At last a group of *kanganis* approached us—and the murder was out. They wanted Mickey all over again!

Well, they got him—and, if that were possible, he was an even greater success. It is safe to say that they retired to their lines at last, their sides aching, but convinced that they had struck the high lights of their lives that night. They had sampled the delights of the cinema—and enjoyed them. Henceforth they were out-and-out movie fans.

A RECENT GERMAN FILM

Although a large number of spectacular films are being produced in Germany, few of them are at present available in this country. Below we reproduce a still from the recent U.F.A. picture NANON, which deals with the period of Louis XIV.



THESE RELIGIOUS PICTURES

By ANDREW BUCHANAN

"Who can know, without long experience, how best to express the spiritual world on the screen? It is a task involving far more than a roll of film, a crêpe beard, and inspiration, for it demands a full understanding of the craft of film making. That rule applies to all . . ."

YOU WILL HAVE noticed the universal practice of employing every available, and unavailable, space for advertising. Once, this business was confined to hoardings and newspapers. To-day, the heavens have been commandeered to enable planes to scrawl messages over the sky, reminding us to take pills, and clean our teeth, whilst other planes, of a lower order, whisk banners over our roofs, publicising competing pills which offer a cure for everything except advertising. Nor is that all, for the air we breathe is filled with velvet voices offering us Beethoven on behalf of baked, biled or beautifying beans. Even the giant ball floating in the bathing pool is there by courtesy of *The News of the Weak*, and announces this vital fact in huge letters on its slippery surface. I have no doubt whatever that a visit to the lower regions would reveal prominent advertising concerns publicising refrigerators in letters of burning coal. Can we wonder, therefore, that the wide open space of the screen has been spotted, and utilised in a multitude of ways, for advertisement, publicity, propaganda, or the projection of ideals—according to the dimensions of one's brow, and the contents of one's pocket?

Usually, the screen is regarded as harmless entertainment—so harmless as to be almost vacuous, yet to-day, it is something more. It is the platform, the pulpit, and the poster space, from which all kinds of folk express themselves, and, until recently, religious bodies were the only groups which had not recognised film as a medium for propaganda. It was inevitable, as I have explained, that industrialists, government departments and "corporate bodies" should employ film for their respective purposes, but since religion has stepped in, there are no others left to try and mould this difficult medium to fit their particular demands. As a result, hosts of people with great qualifications, but little knowledge of film-making, hover around filmdom, and discuss the productions they are sponsoring, with a technical ease that makes the experienced producer tremble with envy. They know exactly what they want, but when, after insistence, they get it, it proves to be exactly what they don't want. That's just one of the whimsy ways of film. This invasion of people unconnected with the world of entertainment, and unacquainted with the difficulties of creative film-making, has resulted in what might be termed a second film industry. It has endowed the screen with a dual personality, one side providing

entertainment for millions; the other, far more serious-minded, and with hardly a smile (not that it has much to smile about) presenting the ramifications and policies of industrialists, ministers, farmers, diplomats, makers of cereal foods (none of whom have thought of the lovely puns they could invent about "cereal films"), and other important people, *outside* the cinema. Should these various sponsors attempt to shout their wares, or their odds, within the sacred precincts of the cinema, they receive a very cold reception, for the public does not wish to pay to see advertisement on the screen. Sometimes, sponsors who are especially anxious to penetrate into cinemas, or whose material happens to be particularly suitable for theatrical release, permit themselves to be guided by expert filmmakers, who show them how to shout their wares, without shouting their wares at all, which is rather tricky, and depends a great deal upon the temper of the sponsor, and the eyesight of the exhibitor. Curiously enough, a great deal of the material provided by sponsors would be most suitable for cinemas if presented without publicity, and in a manner designed primarily for public consumption.

However, lack of programme space and insufficient recognition of shorts has diverted this type of material into non-theatrical channels, and the experienced filmmaker spends his time trying to effect compromises between the demands of sponsors and his own better judgment. Sometimes, his judgment is not better, because, though he is highly skilled in non-fictional film production, he may not be very experienced in catering for the cinema-going public. Those who know everything about public taste are those who provide the mass of entertainment films, and such people rarely if ever handle sponsored productions. Yet, both the fact and fiction schools are using the same medium, and appealing to the same public, though under different circumstances. Sometimes this make me think that more ability to entertain in the non-theatrical world, and more ability to instruct or inform in the entertainment world, would be desirable for all concerned, including the sponsors who, after all, want to make the strongest possible appeal to the public. The fact that sponsored films are shown in halls originally intended for mothers to meet in, cannot harm the cinema, for a minimum of glamour flows from the non-theatrical screen. Consequently, a visit to a gratis, glamourless picture

show will not prevent families paying customary visits to ordinary cinemas.

Meanwhile, a third group has entered the overcrowded city of filmdom, best described as self-producing sponsors, possessed of the highest ideals, and a minimum of technical experience. Some of these are concerned with making religious pictures, designed solely for distribution in churches.

Now one does not attempt to write a novel until one can spell; nor try to make marble live until the art of sculpture has been mastered. Music, singing, painting—all demand long years of intensive study, and yet, for reasons I have never understood, many people, filled with the best intentions, embark on film production with little or no previous experience. One needs thorough knowledge of the scenario, the inside of a camera, the art of lighting, recording, and cutting, before one can hope to qualify for directorial work. I would also include a course of sweating in a projection box, so that when the pupil ultimately takes his seat in the auditorium he can differentiate between faulty projection volume, and bad recording, or careless projection-focusing and poor camerawork. I have always opposed the film principle of starting at the top, and working downwards.

How many people, I wonder, dabbling in film-making for various purposes, have a thorough knowledge of the medium? Presumably, they have been influenced by what they have perceived going on in the professional industry. In so far as religious pictures are concerned, several have been made by firms of repute, and have proved excellent, but others, made by inexperienced people, have turned out unsatisfactory. Should not a religious film reach perfection? Should it not attain spiritual heights which will make it impossible for us to wonder how it was made, how much it cost, who the actors are, why they were selected, and if they are wearing wigs? The religious film should rise above all others. Turn, for a moment, to consider the great religious paintings of past centuries. In what ways do they differ from modern religious *moving* pictures? They are in glorious colours, of course. Anything else? Oh, they *do not move*. Ah! But they *move* those who gaze upon them. I prefer a stationary masterpiece which profoundly moves me, to a moving picture which leaves me unmoved. Those great paintings teach us something else, as we shall see. Think of the impressive work of the Byzantine School, which beautified churches and monasteries, and the wonderful thirteenth-century paintings of Giotto, in the Upper Church of St. Francis at Assisi. Recall Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper," at Milan, perhaps the most awe-inspiring picture of all. It does not move, but it lives. Can we begin to feel the spiritual strength and energy expended by Michelangelo as he painted, unaided, the gigantic frescoes in the Sistine Chapel of the Vatican? Raphael, Titian, Gerard David (creator of the

wonderful Bruges altarpieces) are but a few of those whose art, inspired by religion, illuminates both the centuries that are gone, and the world to-day. A group of German artists calling themselves the Nazarenes, sought to imitate the work of the Primitives, though they could not wholly recapture the genuine religious feeling of those early masters. English Celtic artists, too, painted glorious frescoes in the Dark Ages, which have since been discovered beneath whitewash applied by the Puritans. "Dark" Ages! Is there so much Light to-day?

I have referred in some detail to the great painters, for though inspired, they were also masters of their craft. Work was not begun on their great pictures until they had spent long years of study and toil to reach perfection of expression. Now, who can say whether film is an easier or a more difficult medium than brush and canvas? Who can know, without long experience, how best to express the spiritual world on the screen? It is a task involving far more than a roll of film, a *crêpe* beard, and inspiration, for it demands a full understanding of the craft of film-making. That rule applies to all, whether religious or irreligious, who wish to project their viewpoints, commodities, or nations by means of film. Maybe, the screen is the canvas of the age. Then let those who seek to create masterpieces upon it, learn the fundamentals of their medium.

In conclusion, may I suggest that the policy of presenting religious films in churches is excellent, but it is not enough. The influence of the spiritual factor needs to extend far beyond the Church—to those places where it least exists. It is true that distinctly religious films cannot find a legitimate place in the commercial cinema, but the film exerting a religious appeal most certainly can. Already, several outstanding box-office successes have been based on religious themes. Surely another name is needed in place of "religion," when it is being discussed in relation to film. Religion implies differing sectarian viewpoints, and suggests, in connection with the screen, interfering with the entertainment of the public, whereas nothing could be so undesirable, nor so unsuccessful. Instead, a widespread recognition of the screen's ability to exert a powerful influence to aid mankind is needed. The qualities which need projecting transcend set. They even transcend propaganda as we have come to regard it. They are invisible qualities, urgently needed to counteract the deluge of materialistic subject-matter surrounding us. If this fact is realised, and acted upon, there may be time, even at this late hour, to save civilisation.

However, the first and last rule is to understand the medium one intends to use, whether for theatrical or non-theatrical purposes.

If we could add to our present knowledge—a little of the vision, religious feeling, and artistry of those who lived in the "Dark" Ages, perhaps our moving pictures might move us all in the *right* direction.

I REMEMBER . . .

by CARL MAYER

The famous script writer of "Dr. Caligari" recalls the past and has hopes for the future. It was Mayer who first gave the camera "movement", as is seen in the extract from his directions for "Sylvester" printed below, and it was the primitive little trolley illustrated that changed the history of the film

IT IS SO hard for me to look back and harder still to write about the past. For me it is the future, future all the time, the years to come with their potentialities and achievements, their drama, success and failure unexplored; the past is dead and done with, yet you wish me to write about it. Very well. . . .

I saw *The Last Laugh* again the other day and it reminded me that here was a film of which I was, at the time it was made, quite frankly not a little proud. You see, it was I who had first the scheme that the atmosphere of a film ought to be emphasised by the movement of the camera and that there should be no captions. It was done in the script of my film *Sylvester*, or *New Year's Eve*. Some of you may remember it? (And it was I also who had the idea a little before that in the first film without titles for which I wrote the script—*Rail* (*Scherben*)). In *Sylvester* I told the story of an hour before midnight on New Year's Eve, and the whole film took just one hour also to project. There was a clock in this film showing the time and this clock had to be made dramatic—it had to be *the* film, the central point around which went all the action. For this it was necessary that the camera should be mobile, able to move at will, smoothly, without fuss. All this I wrote into the script, and then pointed it out to the Director, Lupu Pick, and the cameraman, Guido Seeber. Between them they constructed the primitive little trolley you see illustrated on this page. It worked! And as a result of the development of this idea the camera was able to move also in *The Last Laugh*, about which I was telling you.

Will any film ever endure? I look into the future with confidence. So far, I think, the technique of the cinema

is still in its early stages; but one day the great steps forward will be made and, just as scriptive writing under the hands of the first genius burst suddenly into poetry, so also will the first enduring film be made.

Meanwhile we who live in this age when the Cinema is still striving to take shape, can only work and endeavour that the noontide of the Film shall be soon rather than late. With my new script, which tells the story of a Salvation Army girl, I hope to contribute again a little to that which we call the development of the cinema.

You see, I said that it was hard for me to look back, and I seem to have written little but my own thoughts about the future.

SCENE 32 FROM SYLVESTER

STREET AND SQUARE

Camera tracks forward, high up, through the middle:

People. On both sides. Carnival atmosphere. Many look at watches. The dignified looking Porter as well. Hotel guests come out of the revolving-doors. Laughing. Cheerful. Bareheaded. In Evening Dress. They offer champagne to the Porter, and look towards the Square.

Then:

The whole of the hurrying crowd now flows in that one direction. Many clamber on to ledges. Or climb on to one another's shoulders to look out over the Square.

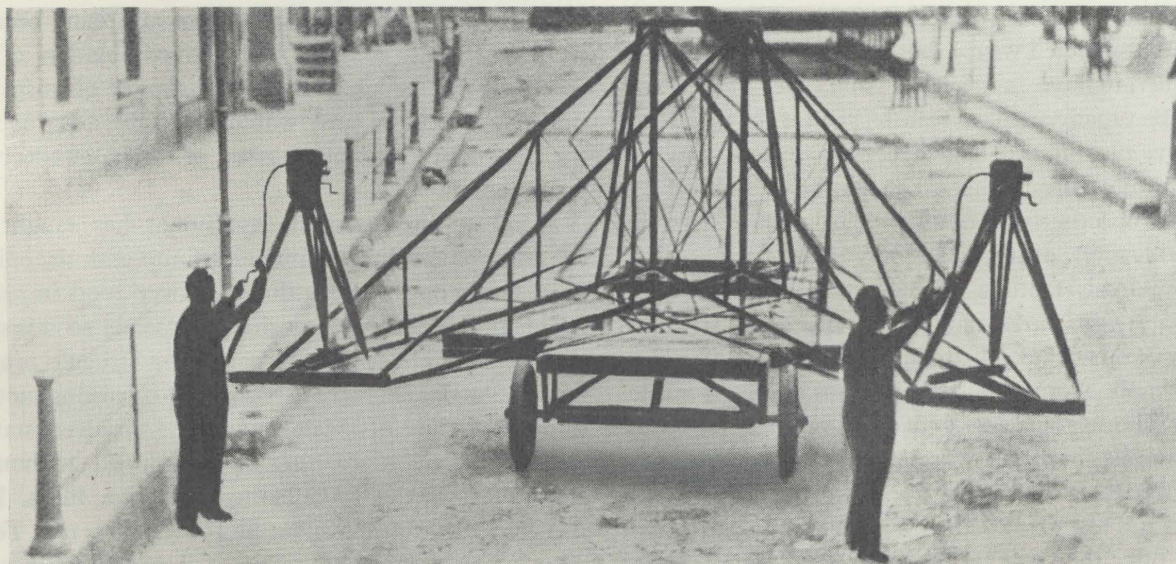
Camera still tracking forward:

The big clock increases in size. Many now point to it with shouts.

And now:

Camera has tracked right up:

To a Big Close Up of the clock. It continues to approach. It is illuminated. Finally it is as big as Fate. Almost leaping out of the frame. The hand shows: eight minutes to twelve.



THE HIGH OR THE LOW ROAD ?

An article on the great promise of the documentary film by Dr. ARNOLD HAUSER

THE DIFFERENCE between the documentary and the so-called story-film lies—as is known—in the fact that the former is lacking an invented plot, a conflict between humans, in fact any kind of yarn, while the latter is based on it. The documentary—except when it is expressly designed to instruct on some special subject—shows Man in contact with the objective world, in conflict with Nature, or straining to overcome now the inertia now the trickiness of matter. Its sole aim is to point out how—harmoniously or disharmoniously—Man fits into the symphony of his objective environment; to point out what happens when he is trying to wrest fertility from the wilderness, or when he builds a railway across the desert, or goes down to the sea in ships, or suffers from the loneliness of the jungle amid the super-civilisation which he has himself created and which, like the broom in *Zauberlehrling*, has become independent and automatous.

But the propensity for the factual and authentic which is the essence of the documentary film, reflects not only a craving for realities, a desire to be kept informed with a latent intention to influence, which are characteristic of our age; it also means the departure from the artistic trend of yesterday, which has been so aptly called “the flight from the plot.” In turn, this tendency which, combined with the flight from the professional actor, has led to the documentary film, signifies not merely the ever-recurring vogue in art to represent unguided reality, uncorrected truth, non-retouched facts, life “as it is”—but, very often, a departure from art itself. However, before we accept the current legend of “real life” in exchange for “art”, let us not forget that this, too, is but a construction, a catch phrase, equivocal and short-lived, just like the successive catch phrases connected with Liberty, Humanity, Progress, Nature, Individuality, in a word, that like these “real life” has a great many artificial features. But if the departing from artistry, playful and detached from reality, and the exaltation of “life” means that art exists for the sake of life and can have no other significance, then we have here the eternal justification of art, the only valid justification. The validity of this attitude was never doubted before the days of “*l'art pour l'art*”; and it is only since we have become accustomed to distinguish between literature proper and books of entertainment, serious and light music, real art of painting and mere decoration, that authority has been possible for artists who have not been using their art to manifest their outlook, to exert a formative influence on mankind and his surrounding or, in brief, to make propaganda, but offer the same product to all the world, friend

and foe alike. The creators and theoreticians of the artistic documentary film—for the time being mostly Englishmen—assert just this, that their films differ from the story-films of the present on the lines of the antinomy of “art and entertainment”, and they unreservedly profess that art must in the main pursue practical aims.

However, many people who readily accept this profession as justified, and even acknowledge its unique human value, will ask themselves whether its manifestations—in this instance the documentary film—can still be regarded as works of art; whether a picture representing reality and devoid of invention, fiction, conflict, can still be included in the category of what we call “film.” But our documentarists would probably have little objection if their films were denied the designation of “works of art.” For they seem to disclaim any deliberate primary artistic intention and, by implication, convey the view that art, as such, has never been anything but a by-product, that is to say that it came into being indirectly, in the service of an aim conditioned by an outlook and orientation in life. At the same time, they hold that practical aims do not preclude the employment of artistic means; on the contrary, to them “artistic” and “purposive” appear to be synonymous concepts. And in fact, the documentary films of Cavalcanti, Flaherty, Grierson, Rotha and Wright—whether their object filmic is art or propaganda—exhaust all the formal means of presentation. They are masters of the camera, of cutting and montage; their work shows subtlety in the transitions, graduation of pace and differentiation of rhythm. In the best examples of their product the composition is close and concentrated, the suspense increasing in tension, the action fascinating. And this is all the more surprising because one would naturally assume that the elimination of human conflict would operate to the detriment of suspense and interest, which in turn would spoil the film as a show, thereby depriving the masses of their intellectual daily bread.

Many an unsuccessful experiment has taught us that the effect of the film, despite its affinity with the epic forms, its basically optimistic outlook, its deep roots in reality and its mainly additive composition, depends so decisively on the dramatic elements of a conflict, a struggle progressing towards a climax, and a suspense consisting not in the unfinished state of a tale but in the unsolved state of an unbearable situation—that it cannot do without these elements. All the so-called cross-section films, like, for instance, the German silent film *Adventures of a Ten Mark Note* or the American talkie *If I had a Million*, which

instead of a personal destiny dealt with a recurring *motif* or with variants of a theme conceived on musical lines, have failed to give full satisfaction, and have only served to prove that a *Leitmotiv* in a film can not replace the centripetal, specifically dramatic structure.

However, the absolute validity of this rule does not imply that the dramatic conflict which has been proved to be indispensable if the film is to retain its appeal to the public, must be a mutual human conflict, a man-to-man fight. The struggle of Man with Nature, with the inhuman and super-human demons, with blind matter or with Providence, is no less dramatic than the theatrical and human conflict, and certainly more filmic than the fight between two humans in the vacuum of purely moral relations. For a film is the more filmic the more it is concerned with the extra-human, objective world, the more conspicuously it strikes a balance between Man and Nature, mind and matter, personality and objectivity. And if we agree with Paul Rotha when he designates all films based on factual reality (and these also include certain historical films) as documentary, we must also agree with him when he not only claims for this category a considerable proportion of the most valuable films of the past, but also regards the documentary as the great hope and promise of future production. In films our real interest and preference

belong to the objective world, the environment of Man; nothing interests us more than a new, hitherto unknown background, or a new aspect of an old one seen with a deeper perception. That is why the best films are those in which the action is thus set in counterpoint with its natural background, and furthermore that is why, in the case of most films, we are more interested in the introductory part, the part in which the environment is presented, and in which author and director live on realities not created by them, than in the rest of the film.

The struggle between Man and the primordial powers is unequal, and is decided in a superhuman and extra-human sphere, so that it is not a suitable subject for drama in the general sense; at the same time, though, it is the primeval conflict which Man is compelled to engage in, and as compared with which all human conflicts appear as a miserable scuffle. That is why, in relation to the epic, the drama is a later product of the human spirit, and that is why it only possesses depth and significance if the human conflict with which it deals symbolises a superhuman one.

The wide range of the objectivity that bursts the bounds of purely human *motifs*, the epic and "documentary" element in every genuine film, may become the source of a new and reverent art of devout faith whose beginning is Goethe's "limitation in devotion to reality."



Deanna Durbin in *That Certain Age*

(See page 161)

Universal

REMEMBER THEM?

ALAN PAGE looks back on 1938 and—
although he thinks it impertinent—picks
a “best of the bunch” list

THIS IS THE traditional time of year for those who write about films to inform the public from the fullness of their wisdom which were the best six, or dozen, or twenty, or fifty films shown during the past twelve months. The number varies in ratio to the degree of jaundice with which the writer regards films. As enjoyment of films is entirely a matter for personal prejudice I always think this rather an impertinence. Any list which I draw up, therefore, will have as its first consideration the fact that I thoroughly enjoyed the films appearing in it. If they happen also to have been stupendous box-office successes or to have been generally adjudged superb by those whose business it is to assess the artistic merits of films, then so much the better.

The old year departed in a blaze of glory so far as films made in this country are concerned, for *The Citadel* was a highly creditable job of work, and since it fulfils my first condition, qualifies for a place in my best-of-the-year list. Certainly I consider it the best British-made film I have seen this year—if not at any time—sincere, strong in story and beautifully acted from Donat down. *The Citadel* is the second film to be made by M.G.M. in this country since the new Films Act came into force, and because of its stronger story, perfection of detail and imaginative direction, is a much more satisfying production than *A Yank at Oxford*, excellent within its limits though the latter was. If these two films are the direct outcome of the Films Act, then hurrah for the Act, because although it may check quantity, it definitely enhances quality!

While we are on the subject of British films and the best-of-the-year, I had better record that I rank for inclusion in my list *South Riding*, *Owd Bob*, *The Lady Vanishes*, *Young and Innocent*, *Pygmalion* and *Vessel of Wrath*, fairer than which I cannot say.

Now let us relax for a minute and take a glance at the more interesting films shown last quarter. First there was *You Can't Take It With You*. Did I say relax? “Take It” as that genius of compression, “Variety”, calls this brilliant film falls, without any reservation whatsoever, into first place on my best-of-the-year list. It was funny and witty, full of sentiment and eyewash, specious philosophy and sly whimsicality, the whole adding up to two full hours of easy entertainment. Incidentally it was also a smash-hit at the box-office and artistically as neat a job of directing as Capra has ever done.

It is worth while to examine this last statement a little more closely. What is it that makes Capra such a good director? Taking something to pieces to see how it works is always a dangerous business, but I should say that the secret of Capra's directing mechanism is his gift for getting the right mood out of his characters: the right mood in his

case being that very tricky state midway between fantasy and reality. In *The Lost Horizon* he went too far into the realms of fantasy; in *You Can't Take It With You*, he goes just far enough, and in every shot one is conscious of the completeness of his grip on the script and of the certainty with which he will get his effects. And how good his cast is! Jean Arthur's croak is more endearing than ever, James Stewart's quiet drawl is most effective in the love scenes, Lionel Barrymore's grunts and groans are nicely subdued and Edward Arnold's rantings and roarings are entirely absent.

Do you remember *Little Women*? If you do and if you liked it you will like *Four Daughters*, which is its modern parallel. It might, in fact, have been called *Big Girls*. It's all deliciously homey and homespun, with lots of girlish laughter and girlish music and a few girlish tears. It might have been just another of those charmingly sentimental domestic tales that Hollywood produces with such sureness of touch, but for the performance of a Mr. John Garfield.



The Mikado

G.F.D.

This is his first appearance in films and there is no doubt in my mind that he's got something, whether its dynamite, electricity or just plain personality. He can also act—not only when he's talking, but even when he's just standing in the background and slightly out of focus. If you are interested in stars, watch Garfield. By the way, *Four Daughters* is an also-ran for my best-of-the-year list, which I will now complete with *A Slight Case of Murder*, *Stage Door*, *Nothing Sacred*, *Love Finds Andy Hardy*, *Mad About Music*, *The Awful Truth* and, of course, *Snow White*. So that's that.

One of the major events of the last quarter was the unveiling of the long-awaited *Marie Antoinette*. The unveiling was a long, slow and frequently tedious business lasting some one hundred and thirty-nine minutes and when the last foot had been revealed one was treacherously tempted to wonder whether it had all been worth while. The sets are lavish in the extreme, the costumes would not disgrace even the most elaborate Cochran revue, the acting is mostly competent and occasionally brilliant, and the history is—well, even if the inferences to be drawn from its presentation are entirely misleading, it's all there. Why, then, is it so unsatisfying? Mainly, I think, because the spirit of the production is so essentially modern American. None of the characters, with the memorable exception of Robert Morley (Louis XVI), seems to have the slightest idea of the tremendous drama in which they are taking part: they wear their clothes with a good sense of theatrical style and they speak their lines with care, but they are just so many dummies taking part in a costly and elaborate charade. Norma Shearer comes smiling thru' in scene after scene, bravely struggling with tears which she never seems able to hold in check, and it is only at the end when she is portraying the disillusioned, heartbroken and now ugly Queen that she achieves any reality. Tyrone Power looks permanently hot under the collar in his part of the surprising Count Axel Fersen, as well he might do. Only in one brief scene does the film seem to present a true picture of the times and that is the one in which the nobility of France is assembled in the room where Marie Antoinette is giving birth, behind a screen, to the Dauphin. This has the startling effect of an old print come to life.

A big disappointment last quarter was *Room Service*. This was a literal transcription of the celebrated stage play, celebrated, that is, in New York, but a flop in London. And this straight farce was the vehicle chosen for the Marx Brothers' latest screen excursion; hence the disappointment. For there were practically no opportunities for their particular brand of crazy fooling, and I personally do not think they put up such a good show as the stage cast. The film did, however, finally dispose of the legend started in certain quarters that the Marx Brothers are surrealist. They never have been surrealist or anything but highly-polished American vaudeville comedians, and those who try to push them into some nonsensical pigeon-hole in an attempt to keep their brows high while enjoying a good belly laugh are doing a great disservice to the comedians. Goodness knows Chaplin has suffered by having intellectuality thrust upon him, and Disney, too, has had to bear the strain of art labels, though he has gone on giving us Donald Duck and box-office smash-hits. So now I hope the Marx Brothers will return to crazy comedy and sternly refuse to regard themselves as great artists.

Talking of crazy comedy reminds me of *Four's A Crowd*, the plot of which had as many twists as the maze at Hamp-

ton Court, and then there wasn't anything in it. The fun was fast and forced and three of the four who made up the crowd did not act particularly well, although the fourth, Rosalind Russell, was very good indeed, and the film was almost worth seeing for the superb minor performances of Walter Connolly, Melville Cooper and Hugh Herbert.

The boy-meets-girl formula is invariably used for the plots of the Astaire-Rogers pictures, and in spite of the strain put upon it by the necessity for finding new twists, it usually comes out pretty well. In *Carefree*, shown last quarter, Astaire was a psycho-analyst with hypnotic powers—a neat way for getting Rogers in and out of love with him. Since the end was never in any doubt, interest was focused on the means which in this case was as agreeably light and fantastic as the dancing toes of the two stars. Good use was also made of slow-motion, for a clever dream dance and Astaire regained a little of the thunder which Rogers stole from him with his brilliant golf-ball dance.

If we are to believe what we see on the screen, American finance, business, politics, sport and education are all conducted not only on extremely unorthodox lines but also frequently in a positively crooked and unscrupulous manner. Since, however, these distortions are mainly made for the sake of story values, we must not believe what we see, and no harm is done. It is when this same licence is taken with history that the public becomes bewildered. History may be the bunk Mr. Ford once pronounced it to be, but the facts are indisputable. The vast majority of the film public regard the facts of screen history in the same manner, all innocent of the tampering that may have gone on for the sake of "story values." Which brings me to *Suez*, that saga of the sand, or great canal canard. Here historical truth was pushed and pulled into the familiar triangular shape with de Lesseps at the peak and the Empress Eugenie and a daughter of the desert at the bases. The result was such as might well discourage all would-be satirists of Hollywood production methods.

Whether or not we were given a true picture of the methods with which American newsreel cameramen carry out their often dangerous job need not worry us in *Too Hot To Handle*. This was a frequently exciting and generally amusing tale of two cameramen and woman aviator. No amount of noble self-sacrifice and ultimate triumph could disguise the fact that the men were a pretty unpleasant pair, despite the personal charm of Clark Gable and Walter Pidgeon. As for the woman, the part was a very poor one and Myrna Loy did not trouble to disguise her boredom with it. Once again, however, our old friend Walter Connolly provided the best moments.

"How long, O Lord, will she last?" must be the anxious prayer muttered in the Universal Studios, concerning the future of Deanna Durbin. Provided she does not lose her voice I see no reason why she should not sing her way to a ripe old age. Anyway *That Certain Age* very deftly got her out of the schoolroom into the cruel world where the snares of love await the innocent maid. The snare in her case was a purely platonic infatuation for a war-weary journalist, played with great tact by Melvyn Douglas, and so Deanna sighed her way through her first love affair which is now all set to be "continued in our next." Actually apart from Douglas, she was less well served than usual with supporting cast and plot trimmings, particularly as far as Jackie Cooper was concerned, who although more suitable in age, seemed a very poor second-best to Melvyn Douglas.



Le Bonheur

VERMOUTH, VODKA AND BEER

The Continental cocktail this quarter is 80 per cent French, with a dash of Russian and Austrian to taste, according to ARTHUR VESSELO

TO SOVIET film-makers the October Revolution has become almost as never-ending a theme as the romantic triangle to film-makers further west; and on Russian screens nowadays the taking of the Winter Palace must be as frequent a sight as the heroic tractors of the 'twenties. In *October*, the Revolution at large was the central figure; in *The Last Night*, the angle of vision had descended to take in the reactions of representative Russian families on both sides of the lines; and now finally, in Michael Romm's *Lenin in October*, it is the personality of Lenin himself—Lenin portrayed elaborately as a man among his fellows, not as a demigod—which is the focusing-point of the action.

The enemy over which our current October Revolution achieves its triumph is a purely internal one—internal not merely to Russia but to the forces combating Tsarism. Kerensky and the Mensheviks are the first object of attack, as one might expect; but the second—remarkable index to present-day Soviet policy!—is Trotskyism. Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev as openly-branded "traitors" to the Bolshevik régime in 1917, and Stalin as Lenin's white-headed boy, are conceptions so completely foreign to one's idea of the true facts that it is difficult to imagine even a native audience taking them seriously; even if, as seems likely, this film is but one item in a highly systematic propagandist revision of the immediate past by the rulers for the Soviet masses.

These considerable departures from authenticity should not, however, obscure the particular virtues of the film's technique. The low key of the action in general, the studied selection of background sounds, the manipulation of human and other masses cleverly against stationary backgrounds

(the camera in each scene never moving on its base) combine, together with smooth cutting and effective continuity, to provide a nice exhibition of professional skill. Of the characters, Kerensky is just a butt, and Stalin a closely-resembling but lifeless lay-figure; but otherwise the acting is sympathetic, and the centrepiece, the picture of Lenin by B. V. Shchukin, very credibly drawn. Essentially civilian, not very well dressed, guarded jealously by his friends not only from his enemies but, like a child, from his own over-enthusiasm, this Lenin is one whose implied genius for organisation, so fostered, might well have made Bolshevik success possible.

The only other non-French item among the quarter's European importations is the pre-Nazi Austrian *Zauber der Bohème*, directed by Geza von Bolvary. This is a sufficiently pleasant, if hardly novel, rehash of Puccini's *La Bohème* story, with Jan Kiepura and Marthe Eggerth singing quite attractively in the leads. Its chief point of note is the extraordinary way in which the producers have tried to enliven a stale formula. They have put the original tale into modern dress, while inserting the actual opera in the background: the climax is thus a stage-performance of *La Bohème* in which the heroine, playing the part of Mimi, dies of consumption at the precise point where Mimi dies.

This, as it were, Dunnian method of dealing with formulæ has horrible possibilities. It is reminiscent of the box inside a box inside a box, or of the famous Camp-coffee bottle on whose label is seen a man holding a Camp-coffee bottle and so *ad inf.* Its implications are metaphysical in their obscurity. What is more *Zauber der Bohème* is not an

isolated case. Marcel L'Herbier's *Le Bonheur* is about a film-star who acts in a film (within the film) also called *Le Bonheur*; and its closing scene opens on a shot which the camera, retreating, reveals as a passage from the secondary *Le Bonheur*, being shown in a cinema with Charles Boyer watching it.

And then again, in the Marc Allegret opus, *Entrée des Artistes*, there are two places where the film, so to speak, steps outside itself: the first occurs when the two lovers, having spent a night together, discuss lightly how this fact would be hinted at in a film—and the camera obediently follows the suggestions given, panning from one object of female attire to another, and reminding us rather too forcibly of a somewhat similar twist in Guitry's *Bonne Chance*; the second is Jouvet's assertion at the end that the events of the story are good enough to be incorporated in a film. These odd involutions do appear to indicate an awareness of the limitations of the screen-formula; but they lead, one fears, into a maze.

The mood of *Entrée des Artistes* fluctuates also. At one moment we seem to be concerned with a semi-documentary account of the lives of students at the Paris Conservatoire; at the next this has dissolved into the old tale of young love; and suddenly, when the film is three parts through, we are transported into the simplified realm of murder-mystery-melodrama. The last development, though least in value, is probably the most satisfactorily handled—too late, however, for the film's already dissipated energies. Through it all, like a humorous spectre, wanders Louis Jouvet, lamenting wryly, as we may imagine, his lack of opportunities.

Inconstancy of mood is a failing which affects, too, Léo Joannon's *Alerte en Méditerranée*; even though it is on the whole one of the soundest pieces of workmanship which France has sent us for some months. On a strict analysis this is three films, not one: beginning in a murder-tangle on shore, it changes its tack in favour of a pursuit by sea, and then—murder and murderer forgotten—turns into a race

against time by a destroyer to save an ocean-liner from the spread of a poisonous gas over the water. But the very sharpness of distinction between the separate elements does at any rate rescue the film from the general confusion of purpose of *Entrée des Artistes* or *Le Bonheur*; and in addition, the progression is from the lowest level to the highest instead of *vice versa*.

The concluding stage of the action, which is the longest, is in basis the film proper; and when once the somewhat uncertain preparations of the earlier parts have been left behind, and the course has become a straight one, excitement rapidly gathers. Production and acting performances are good, and the sea-shots often impressive. It is also a great relief to find the usual romantic business giving place to something which appears to have more meaning. On the face of it, an attempt to save human lives is presumably a worthier theme than any of the variations of the eternal-triangle problem, while the ultimate overcoming of rooted national prejudices by a French, an English, and a German officer, together engaged in the attempt, is an idea with its own appeal. These three characters are rendered, it is true, with a measure of stiffness, which may arise from the too self-conscious awareness of their human significance; and it was unnecessary to underline that significance by ending with scenes of traditional mourning for the officer who has given his life. But, such errors aside, there is good meat in this film.

Violent death rears its head once more in *L'Étrange M. Victor*, a study of an outwardly respectable but in fact double-living shopkeeper in a French south-coast port. Raimu it is who portrays this up-to-date Jekyll and Hyde—family-man and honest tradesman on the one side, thief and murderer on the other. His divided nature displays itself fully when he allows an innocent cobbler to be convicted for his crime, but, on the cobbler's escape, does all he can to shield him, though without explaining why. The difficulty of a subject of this type is that the extremeness of the crime immediately raises the question, "Will the



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criminal be brought to justice?" and this superficial problem sidetracks our interest from the much deeper problem of the central figure's motivation—which at the end is still very far from clear.

Another conventional and superfluous red-herring is the falling-in-love of the sheltered cobbler with his protector's wife. Ninety minutes is so little time in which to conduct psychological explorations of the order involved that every such irrelevance of approach is magnified. However, allowing that the film falls short, it has nevertheless the advantage of understanding actors and a director, Jean Gremillon, with a good sense of atmosphere. Raimu does all that can be done to overcome the incompletenesses of the script; and both Pierre Blanchard as the unfortunate cobbler and Madeline Renaud as the murderer's generous but uncomprehending wife give admirably realistic performances. The locale of the French harbour-town is reconstructed with careful attention to detail, and with a selective use of visual and aural imagery.

In *Katia*, adapted from the Bibesco novel, *Démon Bleu*, and directed by Maurice Tourneur, the romantic formula reigns supreme. Here it is a passage from nineteenth-century history which has been expertly pressed into the time-honoured mould: the love-affair of the middle-aged Tsar Alexander II and the young and beautiful Princess Katarina Dolgorouki, brought to a tragic conclusion by Alexander's assassination in 1881, provides just such a fluid core as appears to be required. Indeed, with Danielle Darrieux taking the name-part in the foreground, and with a sufficient hint of great affairs in the background, this is practically *Mayerling* over again.

It needs no great insight to perceive that *Katia* is primarily a frame for Danielle Darrieux; and with efficient direction and the able assistance of our own John Loder (speaking with an almost suspiciously good French accent) as the Tsar, she succeeds, we cannot doubt, in captivating yet again her eager band of admirers. Since this is the major part of what the producers have set out to ensure, they may presumably be said to have achieved their object.

As far as dependence upon a particular actor goes, *Katia* is however far outpaced by *Pasteur*, though in other respects the latter film is not in precisely the same category. Brought out first in France early in 1935, *Pasteur* gives us the all-encompassing Sacha Guitry in a serious rôle. Its derivation is from the stage, from a play originally written for Guitry Père, and it must be confessed that no special trouble has been taken to conceal the fact. There are relatively few changes of set-up, and lengthy close-shots of the great man declaiming are frequent. As for the temporal continuity, it is at times more than a little hazy, while so important an undercurrent of action as the Franco-Prussian War receives only the minimum of recognition.

Even Guitry's *Pasteur*, taken in itself as a performance, has something too much of the formality of rhetoric which belongs properly to the French stage. The film's interest is in the end chiefly for those whose knowledge of both Pasteur the man, and of the French language, are *a priori* sufficient to stimulate their curiosity in a native presentation of the events of his later years, without regard to niceties of film-technique. For those who cannot follow French easily, the sub-titles are likely to prove only a meagre alleviation.

Pierre Colombier's *Ignace*, with Fernandel as a comic *poilu* in peace-time, is another one-man show whose stage-

affiliations are evident. Not quite so evident as in *Pasteur*; and the film's heart is less buried in the dialogue, since insinuating by-play of expression and gesture, as well as a spectacularly-intended dance-sequence, contribute their share; but it is primarily a one-man show, none the less, and with its minor pretensions to any depth would be little enough denuded of Fernandel. All the well-tried musical-comedy business—much the same, in whatever country—and all the multitudinous Gallic sex-complications which titivate the plot, have their centre in his characteristic antics: there is hardly more to it than that.

Having said so much about the intrusions of the romantic formula, we may end appropriately with a reference to *Légions D'honneur* (director, Maurice Gleize) in which "the formula and nothing but the formula" seems to have been the makers' watchword. There is only one genuine Legion-story, it appears—and this undoubtedly is it. When, in the extensive court-martial sequence at the beginning, we find a gallant officer strangely refusing to exculpate himself from a charge of self-wounding, we divine the cause—hardened and cynical filmgoers that we are—without excessively straining our powers of deduction. Should one add that the officer has a best friend, and the best friend a wife? And need one say more? In the circumstances, the long and slightly outmoded flashback which confirms our simple theories is a trifle repetitive.

Inevitably there are scenes of pleasing desert-photography (vouched for as authentic, and complete with camels), and passages of dramatic desert-fighting in which it is difficult to tell one side from another. Inevitably, also, we are called upon to pay profound obeisance to the patriotic fervour and intense soldierly comradeship of the Legion's officers. But an unwanted reflection creeps upon us: "Why", it inquires with a nasty leer, "must themes so much concerned with the idea of action unravel themselves in so tedious a way?"—and to this indeed there is no adequate answer.



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PITY THE POOR FISH!

ANDREW RICE *ambles cheerfully through evolution to gliding while reviewing these documentaries*

BACK IN THE remote ages B.C. (Before Civilisation)—whether we started as fish, or as some bold thinkers maintain, actually as men—we somehow acquired a thumb. Two thumbs. Without thumbs we would never have got to where we are to-day.

Where are we to-day? But that is a question outside the scope of this article. Many of us haven't the brains of an elephant, the contentment of a cat, the usefulness of a hen, or the industry of a beaver. Look around, though. You'll see we *are* civilised.

Maybe you can blame that on the human thumb.

The point about the thumb is that it enabled early man (early fish or what not) to hold a stick and knock enemies on the head before they could reach him. The thumb is fixed to the hand in such a way that it can encircle and grip a weapon, which can then be flourished in any direction. A monkey can't do that; his thumbs are no good, from walking on them—like our big toes.

Anyhow through years and centuries man gradually rose by knocking the creatures down. Then he discovered fire, and the rest was easy.

These anthropological observations—for what they are worth, and I'm practically giving them away—are provoked by *Fingers and Thumbs*, one of the Animal Kingdom documentaries produced by Strand Films, with Professor Julian Huxley supervising. It tells the story of the hand better than I do. It goes back to the fin stage, before ever fingers and thumbs had separated out. Luckily there are fish still left in the world to-day—the early men, perhaps, of some civilisation æons ahead—so we can see exactly what a fin is like, and, through this singularly graphic film, can understand how the (sometimes) elegant member which now goes into kid gloves might well have developed from it.

There is even, remotely, a love interest in this documentary. With his fingers and thumbs earliest man was able to grab and hold his mate in a way which a fish can never hope to do. Indeed, the fish seems to have given up trying.

East Anglia Films have turned out what, in my view, is the most dramatic documentary of the past quarter. It will be recalled that, in the early part of last year, the sea broke over the low-lying east coast, flooding acres of farm land in East Anglia, isolating villages, and generally wrecking the countryside. *The Sea Breaks Through* tells the story of this invasion, and how—working frantically between the high spring tides—every man available was on hand to contrive a sea-wall so that the disaster should not be repeated. It *was* repeated; the wall could not stand up to the rushing seas; but the wall was built again before the next high tides, and this time it held.

This is a subject which the news reels must, of necessity, cram into about a minute and a half, and one never appreciates the pluck and the anxieties of those who were on the spot. Here the documentary very usefully steps in, not faking the drama of the fight with the sea, but letting it tell its own story which is dramatic enough, isn't it?

The commentary is quiet and effective—and a lesson to the *March of Time* people who invariably distract me from their excellent pictures by some such obvious commentary

as, "And now the mighty seas, in their fury, HURL themselves upon the flimsy defences which mere man has had the AUDACITY to raise against elements which cannot—WILL NOT—be opposed. Lashed by the storming waters, whipped by remorseless gales, the sea wall groans under the assaults of pitiless Nature. Will the wall hold? Anxiously the farmers watch. Only a few baulks of timber, a hastily erected bulwark of sand, lies between them and destruction. But now in a dozen places, the water is seeping between the useless barriers. Neptune—former sea-god according to pagan beliefs, now generally discounted—will not be denied. The wall cracks, breaks—and roaring its triumph, the SEA IS THROUGH. TIME MARCHES ON."

As I say, resuming a normal voice, the shots in *The Sea Breaks Through* are allowed to show for themselves just what happened, with no smart camera angle trickery—and, in one way and another, I felt that here was the nucleus of a full length picture in the same tradition as *The Edge of the World* or *Turn of the Tide*. Twist a story around the floods and the sea wall, and you have it.

What I like about this new sport of gliding—"sail-planing" it's called when you get better at it, though I don't see why, as "gliding" is the neater word—is its *silence*. Several times I have lain out on the grass of Dunstable Downs, undistracted by popping motors and whirring propellers, but sleepily soothed by the soft rush of wings overhead and by the curiously restful appearance of aircraft seeming to hang in the sky. Yachting is the nearest thing to it.

Prelude to Flight—a Savoy production—is a picture about gliding—and a good one. All of it appears to have been made at the London Gliding Club, and we follow the novice, who goes thumping into the ground on a practically unbreakable pupil plane, until he has learnt to handle the more advanced machines; and then we are allowed up with him. In other words, many of the shots in this film were actually taken from gliders in flight. So you get all the sensations of gliding without any of the nausea.

Real live members of the London Gliding Club were impressed to appear in the film. You can tell they're authentic because most of them act so badly, and utter their few lines of dialogue like a recitation, e.g., "the—weather—is—clearing—don't—you—think?" "Yes—we—(h'm)—should get—some—good—gliding—this—after—noon." One novice, demonstrating a pupil machine, seemed specially nervous and camera-conscious. But perhaps he was just glider-conscious—and no wonder, the first time.

Still, it was not good acting but good flying one looked for in this picture. And one certainly got it. Specially impressive are the shots taken from beside the pilot in flight, and to hear his vivid comments on the type of cloud to make for in the hope of finding an upward current of air was absorbing. The odd hush is again impressive, when, height gained, the hooting of cars down below is no longer heard, nor the barking of dogs; and one realised that steady nerves are needed to overcome the loneliness and often the seeming menace of black clouds massing so near at hand.

Mr. D'Arcy Cartwright must have enjoyed himself, and got plenty of fresh air, directing this admirable picture.

BURIED ALIVE

The cinema solves a mystery. Author of this entertaining article is HARRY PRICE, Honorary Secretary of the University of London Council for Psychical Investigation

EARLY IN JULY, 1938, a man came to me with the request that he should be "buried alive". There was nothing very remarkable about this, as people frequently visit my office with the most queer suggestions. But this man was an Egyptian fakir, and the "burial" business was just one of the ways he earned his living.

The fakir's name is Rahmen Bey, handsome, young and—obviously—brave. He has often submitted to interment, and only two weeks before his visit to me, had been imprisoned in an air-tight metal casket and lowered to the bottom of the swimming pool at Dolphin Court, where he remained under water for sixty minutes. This is not quite so dramatic as it sounds, as I worked out the cubic content of air in the casket, and found that he actually received more of this very "local atmosphere" than he would have done in an official A.R.P. shelter during an air raid. But personally, I should have died from claustrophobia.

So I said I would test him, and made the following conditions: (a) That he was to be "buried" in a grave, six feet deep, six feet six inches long, and three feet wide; (b) that he was to be "buried" without a casket; (c) that he was to remain under the earth for at least sixty minutes. He cheerfully agreed to our terms.

The preliminary test took place on July 15th, 1938, on the historic site at Carshalton where we finally solved the fire-walk mystery. It was a wet day, and we rather envied Rahmen who was going to be snug and dry six feet below ground. Incidentally, I had no idea that graves were so expensive: this one cost me three pounds, which did *not* include shovelling the earth back again.

Of course, there was some risk in the experiment and, to be on the safe side, I obtained from Rahmen a document stating that it was he who had suggested the interment, and that he alone would be responsible. This document was signed *before* the test, as I doubted whether the fakir would be able even to write his name in case anything went wrong.

About forty of us met round the graveside on the afternoon in question, and among my friends were several doctors—just as a precaution. A photographic record of the whole proceedings was arranged for and I decided I would film the experiment from start to finish.

Just before three o'clock, Rahmen Bey was led out of the house by his manager, who introduced him to the wet, but quietly excited, spectators. He was dressed in the white robes of his profession, a little incongruous we thought in a Surrey garden. He bowed to the company, and then the medicos felt his pulse, took his temperature, listened to



his heart, and tested his respiration. Everything appeared satisfactory. These physiological preliminaries over, Rahmen prepared himself for the self-induced cataleptic trance, a state absolutely essential for the ordeal.

I have never seen a person entrance himself so rapidly or so easily. He just stood in front of his manager, placed his open hands to his temples, pressed hard, gave a few convulsive shivers, and fell, stiff and rigid, into the arms of his friend behind.

Rahmen was placed on a shutter and lowered by ropes into the grave. It was all quite orthodox. Another shutter was then placed over him in order to keep the earth from his eyes, nose, ears and mouth. His hands were still apparently hard pressed to his temples, a vital necessity for full trance, as we afterwards learned.

I must here mention that just before we lowered Rahmen, his manager suggested that, "in order to be on the safe side", we might perhaps bury an electric bell-push in the grave, in case the fakir "came to" before the hour was up, and wanted assistance. I readily agreed and the push was placed in Rahmen's hand, the bell being on the grass by the side of the pit. This little afterthought probably saved the fakir's life—but I am anticipating.

Well, there was Rahmen nicely tucked up at the bottom of the grave and the diggers were told to shovel back the four tons of earth as quickly as possible. As the stones rattled on the shutter under which the fakir was sleeping, I remember hoping that he was all right. As a matter of fact, I felt a bit uneasy myself, because document or no document, I had an idea that if anything went wrong, I might be held responsible in spite of the fact that the test was held in the interests of science.



SOS FROM THE GRAVE

The men worked with a will and in four-and-a-half minutes nearly two feet of earth had been shovelled back. And then it happened! The bell rang—two short, sharp rings like a telephone signal. As Rahmen's manager literally flung himself into the grave, my heart almost stood still. What had happened? Was Rahmen passing out? How long could he last? How could we save him? These, and a score of other unpleasant thoughts chased one another through my brain as four people in the pit tore away the earth with their hands in an effort to introduce air between the top shutter and the sides of the grave. Again the bell rang—a little feebler, we thought. With hands torn and bleeding the rescuers finally got the top shutter off and revealed the rather scared-looking fakir, now very wide awake. They lifted him out of the pit, and handed him over to the doctors. He was little the worse for his adventure, but very disappointed that he had "come to" so prematurely. After a drink of milk he was all right again.

WHY THE TRANCE FAILED

Of course, explanations were demanded and received. It appears, according to Rahmen's story, that when he was being lowered into the grave, with arms akimbo, an elbow must have caught the side, thus jerking one of his hands from off his temple. This had the effect of lessening the intensity of the trance. When he entered this state, he subconsciously prepared himself for an hour's cataleptic sleep. That jerk of his arm cut this down to four-and-a-half minutes, as we have seen. He was very sorry and all that, and hoped we would permit him to repeat the experiment the next day, taking greater care when lowering him into the pit.

WHAT THE CINE CAMERA REVEALED

Rahmen Bey's explanation sounded convincing enough though, very curiously, no one saw the incident. The helpers themselves did not admit that his arm had been knocked, and were certain it had not. Later, when we came to develop the series of photographs, every print of the fakir on his way down the pit pictures his arms in their prescribed positions. But when my cine film was processed and run through the projector, Rahmen's story was confirmed. It clearly proves that his elbow *did* strike the edge of the pit, shifting his hand from his forehead.

Thus ended our preliminary experimental interment of Rahmen Bey. This rehearsal was staged for the purpose of acquiring data with a view to making exact physiological tests of the interred man in trance by means of various instruments. Whether these tests are ever carried out is doubtful as we came to the conclusion that in the pit, as in the casket, there was sufficient air to support life for a period of several hours. And the tests could be more easily made with the fakir sitting in an armchair. In the meantime, my three-pound grave is still waiting to be filled in and spoiling a perfectly good tennis lawn. But it will come in handy as an A.R.P. shelter in the next "crisis".

The illustrations on this page show, from top to bottom, Rahmen Bey going into his trance, being lifted into the grave, lying in the grave, and finally, being helped out after the failure of the experiment.

AMERICAN FILM DIRECTORS AND SOCIAL REALITY

Don't let the title of this article put you off. You may not agree with everything he says, but at least HERMAN G. WEINBERG will interest you

OUT OF THE welter of Hollywood directors, good, bad and indifferent, emerge a handful who have not been satisfied just to turn out slick films that would make money and get them more assignments, but who have, either out of instinct, or out of artistic conscience, strayed off the well-worn path to delve into the film of social reality. None of these men, save perhaps, Griffith, was a crusader, none began with any particular credo, social or political theory, nor was any moved by a consistent inner urge to look life square in the eye and do something about it, save, perhaps, von Stroheim. As for the rest, their story is one of spiritual growth and development, a maturity that came slowly, but as surely, as a child learns. But they all learned and developed their craftsmanship so that they could give form to their expression. And they became greatest when they broke the rules of the art they helped to create.

D. W. Griffith, with *The Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance*, established the art of the film in America. In the former, aside from the then revolutionary technique which set down the basic grammar of film construction, he presented the Civil War as a tragedy, for the first miracle. A southerner, he lost his perspective and objectivity in his treatment of the negro, which has mitigated against the validity of the film ever since. But as a first step towards the social documentary film it was of incalculable importance. *Intolerance* was a plea for the common brotherhood of man—its anti-war scenes presaged those of Dovzhenko in *Arsenal*, its parallel telescoping of five ages in the history of the world was not alone a gigantic cinematic achievement but a socio-philosophical argument for peace and goodwill of striking fervor and driving force.

Subsequently he made films of the American Revolution and Abraham Lincoln, but it was in *Isn't Life Wonderful?* a simple story of starving post-war Germany of 1919, that he matched the lyricism of the best moments of *Intolerance*. The boy and girl have gathered a cart of potatoes—this is wealth and on this they will marry. Some marauding, starved ex-soldiers waylay them and overturn their cart, gathering up the potatoes and running off to the forest. The girl weeps in despair and hurls shouts of "Beasts!" after them. One turns around and says, "Beasts they have made us!" Griffith has reviled war whenever he could. His was the true Christian spirit in the films, that of the crusader and the missionary, a lone, solitary figure who single-handed paved the way for *Potemkin* and *Mother* and the whole school of the Soviet films.

King Vidor, with the inscrutable face of a Buddha, with *The Big Parade*, *The Crowd*, *Our Daily Bread* and *Street Scene*, became for a while our foremost commentator on the American scene. In the first he broke with the then popular Hollywood sport of treating the war as a comedy of dough-boys and ma'mselles. He dared to film a scene showing an American soldier sympathising with a wounded German soldier (from which Milestone was subsequently to borrow for *All Quiet on the Western Front*). Before that, as in *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, the Germans were still

"Huns." He dared to show American soldiers damning war. To Vidor the ma'mselles, however fetching, did not compensate for a bullet in the belly, a shattered leg, a bayonet ripping through the stomach. In *The Crowd* he dealt with the tragedy of lower-middle-class America, their pathetic dreams, their futile lives; in *Our Daily Bread* he discussed the problem of the communal farm, all working for the good of one, one working for the good of all; in *Street Scene* he dealt rawly with everyday facts, crime and passion, dreams and desires, the world in microcosms on a New York street. Most recently, after a long period of inactivity, he has made a brilliant come-back with *The Citadel*, which almost succeeds in being a plea for socialised medicine, but which does, at any rate, attack certain well-known malpractices in medicine and is, on the whole, a courageous and moving film. How far removed we are already from the Hollywood formula in the work of these two men, Griffith and Vidor.

Lewis Milestone's *All Quiet on the Western Front* will secure him a perpetual niche in the American cinema hall of fame. In this, at last, the punches are not pulled. He put Remarque's bitter indictment of the late European carnage on the screen with fine fury and tenderness. Save for some bad flaws in casting (Lew Ayres, Beryl Mercer, Slim Summerville, for instance), the story came through with uncommon power. As a film, it was, perhaps, not inspired, but as an attack against war it was the furthest step yet taken from those dark days of *The Beast of Berlin*. In *Rain* (from the Somerset Maugham play) he treated hypocrisy with fine scorn, while in *The Front Page* he put the Hecht-MacArthur shenanigans on the screen with such gusto that the film became one of the best satires on American institutions we have ever had.

Always has anger made American film directors great. Griffith, Vidor and Milestone, all had this capacity to be angry—this is what pumped the life-blood into their best work.

So was Mervyn Leroy angry, when he made *I'm a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, and John Ford, when he made *The Informer*, and Archie Mayo, when he attacked Lynch-justice in the savage *Black Legion*. Even Lubitsch, who became synonymous with silken Parisian truffles about love and sex, became angry once and filmed Rostand's *The Man I Killed*, in which the war-makers were held up to withering contempt. Anger was responsible for the best of the gangster cycle, William Wellman's *The Public Enemy*, for Roland Brown's biting and acrid *Quick Millions*, for Howard Hawks's *Scarface*, probably the toughest American film yet made. Fritz Lang, in *Fury*, made the most damning indictment of lynch-justice in a film notable for its demoniacal power. In *You Only Live Once* he attacked a society which is responsible for crime through its own stupidity and neglect. Raoul Walsh with *What Price Glory*, Marion Gering with *Mary Burns*, *Fugitive*, Dieterle with *The Life of Emile Zola*, *Pasteur* and *Blockade*, all rose to a high passion and the result was good film, honest film, even

commercially successful film! The public, fed up with the banalities of the formula Hollywood product, flocked to see these films. The critics cheered. There was hope for the American cinema yet!

Probably the greatest single talent that the Hollywood film developed was the art of Chaplin. From the early solo virtuoso pieces like *The Floorwalker* and *The Rink*, through the more mature and deeper humour of *The Pilgrim*, *Shoulder Arms* and *The Kid*, his development was amazingly sure and complete. By the time he reached *The Gold Rush*, Chaplin's humour became Hogarthian, while most recently, in *Modern Times*, the darkest and most troubled of all his films, despite its gargantuan hilarity, he dared to make a comedy around things of terrible veracity—strikes, unemployment, police v workers, street demonstrations, the "speed-up", and the whole part and parcel of the capitalist system.

One of the most discussed moments in all film history was that in *Modern Times* when Chaplin innocently picks up a red "danger" flag that has fallen off a passing truck and, while marching after it to return it to the driver, finds himself leading an anti-war parade of unemployed workers. For several hundred feet of film, Chaplin is waving the red flag at the head of this street demonstration until the police come and break it up, arresting him as the Communist ringleader. Chaplin has good-naturedly denied that there was any significance to this sequence, claiming it was just a gag, to get a laugh. Chaplin is an angel but this time he told a little white lie. I shall never be convinced that this sequence was not deliberately contrived as a gag to cover up Chaplin's real feelings on the subject of unemployment, hunger and war. In the Soviet Union they were amazed that Chaplin was allowed to make such an outspoken attack against Capitalism in America. There, they adore him, as they do in France—but his films are banned in Germany and Italy.

Need we say more?

Another director of comedy who progressed in his social philosophy was Frank Capra, who began as a director of slap-stick, matured as the discoverer of the wonderful comic talents of Harry Langdon in *The Strong Man* and finally, in *It Happened One Night*, made the classic American comedy of manners. His five films, beginning with *Lady for a Day* to *You Can't Take It With You*, were tirades against wealth accumulated for its own sake. In *Lost Horizon*, he did the best that could be done, I suppose, with James Hilton's fragile story, but the high-purpose was there, and that's the important thing. In the Kaufman-Hart play he went even further, but was it in *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* that he reached his greatest depth of feeling. Unemployment and hunger are not jokes to Capra and the film becomes dead serious when it discusses them. *Mr. Deeds* preaches the ideal of collective security, the brotherhood of man—it deflates pompousness, pedantry, hypocrisy. It is a good film for Mr. Capra to have made.

Mervyn Leroy, in *They Won't Forget*, made a violent film around the case of the Jewish school-teacher who was lynched in the South many years ago; Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur did an almost anarchistic film in *Crime Without Passion*, an attack against the bourgeoisie; while films like *Hallelujah*, by King Vidor, an epic of the Negro spirit; *Cabin in the Cotton*, which dealt with the plight of the share-croppers; and *Massacre*, which exposed the swindle of the American Indian by their exploiters—all proved further that there was a coterie of Hollywood

directors who had the courage to tackle worth-while themes and could turn them into vital and significant photoplays. Truly, America was developing an indigenous cinema.

Mention must certainly be made here of the excellent work done independently in the documentary and allied films by young American directors, Paul Strand with *The Wave*, our own counterpart to Piscator's *Revolt of the Fishermen*; Pare Lorentz with the Resettlement Administration film, *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, and the Farm Security Administration film, *The River*; the Schoedsack-Cooper *Grass*; Karl Brown's *Stark Love*; the Stevins-Hill *People of the Cumberland*—all are representative of the best work being done in this field by Americans. The forthcoming film version of the housing play by Arent "... one third of a nation ..." and the Civil Liberties film will, no doubt, clinch the argument further, were that at all necessary.

No attempt has been made to list anywhere near all the films by American directors that have strayed off the beaten track to say something new and worth saying. Nor have all the old hands at the game of film directing, and the new young men, been mentioned. Suffice it here to give representative examples of what has been accomplished in the way of a courageous cinema in America, which, despite all the attacks against Hollywood for squandering millions on tripe, does, after all, have a balance on the credit side of the ledger.

It is true that Hollywood would not dare to make *Professor Mamlock*—it has already shelved Humphrey Cobb's *Paths of Glory*, Werfel's *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* and *It Can't Happen Here*, along with Goldwyn's projected anti-Nazi film, *The Exiles*. The U.S.S.R., alone, dared expose the contemptible psyche of the Nazis in a film (*Professor Mamlock*). Hollywood has nothing to lose by also making an anti-Nazi film of the same proportions since most American film companies have already been forced to liquidate their holdings in Germany and Italy. Perhaps, if Chaplin is not kidding about that concentration camp comedy he announced as his next film, we shall yet have it.

There remains the contribution of Eric von Stroheim to the cinema of social reality. For a decade or more he was the Zola of the American screen and, with *Greed*, he strove for a more acid social reality than had ever been achieved before. In his continental comedies, *Blind Husbands*, *Foolish Wives* and *The Merry Widow*, he exposed the decadence of Central European royalty with the effectiveness of a surgeon's scalpel. His war scenes in the unfinished *Merry Go Round* had all the terrible indictment of those in *The End of St. Petersburg*. In *The Wedding March* he showed us a Vienna far removed from the gay pre-war metropolis. Always, he has been concerned with showing the high-world in its last stages of sophisticated decay. In *Greed*, his most important work, he reviled the lust for money and its dehumanising effect. And now, he will again embark on a directorial effort, his first in many years, *The Crown of Iron*, a "cavalcade" of Austria from 1900 to the post-*anschluss* tragedy.

No, one cannot say that American film directors have shirked the responsibility that was theirs with the great medium of the cinema at their disposal, not with such a record of achievement. These accomplishments have been cumulative, each breaks ground for the other and for new visions that will clarify the American and world scene to the millions to whom the films are the reflection of the modern world.

DIAL G.P.O.

*for news of their new films and this is what
you will hear from RUSSELL
FERGUSON . . .*

AMONG THE films at present being made by the G.P.O. Film Unit is one on the general subject of health in industry. The film is designed to illustrate the greatly increased interest which industrial concerns throughout the country are taking nowadays in the health and safety of their workers, not only for the increase of national efficiency, but also for the sake of the workers themselves as human beings.

The film will be so constructed as to illustrate the more interesting and important of the various devices and safeguards which are provided for the safety and health of industrial workers: the screens, shields, goggles, helmets and protective clothing; ventilation systems, motion studies, aptitude tests, welfare services.

Sponsored directly by the Post Office, the film will of course make special reference to the Post Office medical and health services. As the largest employer of labour in the country, and one of the oldest established, the Post Office was one of the first industrial concerns to make systematic provision for the maintenance of the health of its employees and has built up in the course of the last century a medical service which takes care of Post Office workers very thoroughly and efficiently.

But the account of the Post Office services will be presented as part of the general theme; man's struggle for health and happiness in the machine age.

A number of films are being made dealing more specifically with Post Office subjects. The purpose of these is to stimulate interest in and convey information about the Post Office services, particularly in their wider civic aspect, i.e. to show the communications services in relation to the life of the people of the country.

An interesting subject is treated in a film which is at present being produced, i.e. communication with islands. Round the coast of Britain there is a large number of inhabited islands, each of which supports a little community which has its own peculiar economic life, its own traditions, and in some cases its own institutions. These communities, formerly more or less isolated, are now in constant touch with the mainland and with the great centres of trade and commerce.

The maintenance of communications with these islands presents special problems, particularly at certain times, as when local harvests, or the tourist season, produce a sudden increase in traffic to and from the mainland. The film will show how this increased traffic is dealt with by the Post Office services, and will also have general interest, presenting an account of the various communities concerned.

More important in the treatment of the film is the emphasis upon the function of communication in social and economic development. Some of the islands round our coasts are only now becoming interdependent with the mainland, and the people only now beginning to participate in

the services and facilities offered by the larger community of the mainland.

In this respect they illustrate the condition of our larger island, Great Britain, some centuries ago, when we lived an independent national life. By now, communications are so advanced that we think of Britain not as an island, but as a part of Europe and the world.

The City

The City is the provisional title of a film which illustrates how the G.P.O. Film Unit takes a subject which at first sight appears to be of purely Post Office interest, and deals with it in such a way as to relate it closely to the general life of the people and to raise interesting considerations of a general nature.

The Post Office owns an underground railway which runs from Paddington Station, in the West End of London, to the Eastern District Office, in the East End. It is quite an interesting railway in itself. The trains are driverless, and carry nothing but mail bags containing letters and parcels. The system is electrically operated and controlled from switchboards. There are seven intermediate stations, and the railway thus links up a chain of postal sorting offices. Trains run at an average speed of 37 miles per hour, and thus afford rapid transport from point to point along the course of the railway. At each of the sorting offices there is efficient modern machinery for rapid handling of mails. Shutes and conveyors connect the sorting offices with the railway platforms 80 feet underground.

But it is when we come to consider the reason for the building of this railway that we find ourselves involved in the study of London as a social phenomenon. The railway was built because surface transport through the centre of London from East to West is necessarily so tardy that H.M. mails were undesirably delayed. The extreme congestion of Central London is due to several factors which will be illustrated in the film.

In respect of width, direction and general lay-out, the streets are much the same as they were centuries ago, and in many instances bear the same names. Into these narrow streets come hundreds of thousands of workers to do their daily work in thousands of offices and banks, for this small area is the centre of a great empire.

The matter is further complicated by the fact that in addition to being the administrative centre of the country and of the Empire, London is the greatest port and the greatest manufacturing centre in Great Britain, in fact one of the greatest in the world. Goods traffic is very heavy.

The streets of the City are almost completely deserted after 6 o'clock at night, and all day on Sundays. During the day, however, they are filled with a dense slow-moving stream of traffic. Rather than face the task of trying to ensure speedy relays of mails through these narrow streets, the Post Office sends its urgent traffic underground by means of its own railway.

News for the Navy

This railway is also illustrated in a little film recently completed called *News for the Navy*. The film traces the progress of a newspacket sent by his sweetheart to a blue-jacket serving in one of H.M. ships. Mail for the fleet in foreign waters is separately handled at one particular centre, at King Edward Building, and the sorting office



The Islanders

G.P.O.

which receives the packet in question transmits it, along with others, by underground railway to the sorting office at King Edward Building. The packet is followed closely through all the stages of the journey, until it finally reaches its recipient in a cruiser at Bermuda.

The film may be regarded as a sort of technical film, i.e. it is concerned directly with the processes employed in mail sorting, transmission, despatch and delivery.

Such explanatory films are produced by the Post Office Film Unit as supplementary to the more important films in which wider aspects of the service are discussed.

Speaking from America

A technical film of this kind is being made to illustrate a new and interesting technique of short wave wireless reception which is at present being tried.

Short wave radio is particularly subject to interference, which becomes acute at those periods when sunspots occur with unusual frequency. The last "sunspot period" was 1929, and since it has been observed that these periods occur once every eleven years or so, sunspot trouble is expected by radio engineers about 1940.

To offset the effect of such interference a new technique of reception has been devised and is being tried by the British Post Office in collaboration with American radio engineers.

To describe it very roughly, the system uses compensating devices to compose into a single signal traces of the original impulse which have been made fragmentary by interference. A special array of aerial wires is employed consisting of a two-mile string of diamonds or rhombics of wire, sixteen in all, each about a furlong in length and about eighty yards wide, with the longer axes of the diamonds in alignment, and accurately pointed at the transmission station in America.

These aerials will not be high, but there are peculiar requirements which must be fulfilled in the site on which the system is erected. After much inquiry and exploration, the Post Office found a suitable site at Cooling Marshes, a tract of land reclaimed from the Thames Estuary near Rochester. This land meets the requirements in that it is

almost perfectly flat, i.e. the height of land does not vary any more than a foot or two within the whole area, is clear of all buildings and trees, and is remote from towns and from roads carrying motor traffic. At the same time it is reasonably near London, an important consideration in view of the cost of the land line which is used to connect it up with the Faraday House. The site at Cooling has a further recommendation, namely that the ground is damp, which is necessary for the sake of electrical conductivity.

By this system, it is expected that the reception of short-wave radio telephony from America will be consistently good, whether ether conditions are favourable or otherwise. The system will also improve the short wave relays of the B.B.C.

The above will serve as a sketch of the present activities of the G.P.O. Film Unit in respect of their ordinary routine, i.e. the interpretation and commendation of the services of the Post Office. A few short films of an experimental nature are also being made. *God's Chillun* is an experimental film, similar to the early *Coal Face* in that the sound was completed first, and and the visuals later cut and combined with the sound track. It is a poem with music, the poetry by W. H. Auden, the music by Benjamin Britten.

Another experimental undertaking is the making of the first educational silent film for schools which the Unit has so far essayed as a special production. It is called *Penny Journey*, and traces the progress of a post card from Manchester to a little village in Sussex. In former years a considerable number of educational silent films have been produced, but they have been made generally speaking out of cut-outs from sound films. *Penny Journey* has been scripted, shot and edited as a separate undertaking.

Colour has not been forgotten. Lotte Reiniger, who recently made *The Tocher* for the G.P.O. Film Unit, is at present engaged in producing a colour silhouette film which she has called *H.P.O.* In the service these initials mean Head Post Office, but in Miss Reiniger's film they stand for *Heavenly Post Office*, where according to Miss Reiniger, the Greetings telegrams are received and despatched. The film will be of a fanciful and poetic nature, like all the work of this celebrated Viennese silhouette artist. In this film she will be experimenting for the first time with colour.

FILM CLICHÉS

Even this newest of all forms of expression is developing its conventions, according to WILLIAM E. DICK

IN THESE DAYS when the restless searcher after new techniques is considered the saviour of art, it has become a custom to deride the cliché as a thing trite and outmoded.

But the cliché—and all arts have their own expressive clichés—is a technique, a method, that has become nicely rounded through a process of natural evolution. The gradual disappearance of the weird, outlandish methods, so popular with the *avant-garde*, is proof that they never were really valuable.

I purposely started this article with a cliché: "It has become a custom to deride . . ." It is a conventional phrase, and yet it is impossible to deny that it expresses its meaning succinctly.

A cliché is trite, only in the sense that it is well worn. But it only becomes a cliché *because* it wears so well! It is only when the cliché has become verbose and uneconomical that succeeding generations relegate it to the melting pot!

Now to apply this idea to cinema, for cinema like all other arts and near-arts has its own clichés. Here are a few to make my meaning clear: the close-up, slow motion, the truck, and stock cinematic situations and methods. Maybe they look like fundamental techniques of cinema to you: I think you will see as I go from point to point that they are more in the nature of clichés.

All these instances I mention are clichés and they all have their legitimate place in any film. All of them are liable to abuse.

EARLY "CLICHÉS"

When the films first got past the kindergarten stage, it was realised that they would provide an easy way of making money. If you had succeeded in amusing or terrifying your audience, you had achieved that mysterious quantity, "entertainment value", and the public were supposed to go away drugged and satisfied. You must admit that the early film-makers soon had us fooled with their blizzards of custard tarts, their oceans of synthetic tears, their portraits of vicious, dog-kicking villains, their hackneyed misers with gnarled, self-congratulatory hands. They had found the visual clichés to register outraged virginity, villainy, adventure, thrills. The abstracts had been given their visual equivalents. The first set of cine clichés had been born.

Even when used by second-rate directors, these methods never failed to make otherwise intelligent people cry or laugh, at the right moments. In an industry which is expensive by very reason of its equipment, its elaborate technical processing, its system of distribution, it was scarcely surprising that the film maker always fell back on the safest method of film making—the use of the tried cliché.

Cinema is still an industry in which finance invariably (even in Soviet cinema) overrules the creative artist.

When you compare the number of existing clichés with the miserable number of new developments now taking

place you will be astounded. For instance, what have directors done to develop the use of music to create atmosphere; what have they done in the way of cutting film to music, reducing the number of "cuts" in a film and increasing its continuity by the technique of *Jeanne Ney*, and using the camera as a cine-eye to give *impressionist effects*? Nothing, of recent years! Yet all of these ideas have a place in the evolution of cinema. They have not yet been included in ordinary films, and are therefore untried.

The days of the early cinema with clichéd techniques to register pathos and humour and all the other emotions eventually passed, and a few directors began to realise that the film could be used as a medium for self-expression. The least it could do was to tell a story artistically.

Film workers began to see the glimmerings of film as a new art form, though the promise that they saw has not yet been fulfilled in its entirety.

Griffiths saw that film was a matter of bits and pieces. You did not show the whole scene as in a theatre; you showed a selection of shots from that scene—a cine-sequence. In just the same way it was not necessary to look at objects in their entirety; the close-up might be more effective than the complete shot. In *Birth of a Nation* a new cliché was born—the close-up. But when he showed those flashing horse hooves, little did he know that films would be reduced to the doldrums when magnified shots of actresses with cream cheese faces would fill the screen for minutes at a time and provide the audience with time off for their own love-making!

But the close-up is a good technique when properly used. For the close-up can be used to magnify *motion* as well as figures. A close-up of a flying hoof or a turning wheel is far more dramatic than in long shot. For the nearer you go to an object, the faster it seems to go.

After all the close-up is only man's method of taking advantage of the natural laws of perspective. And being a natural law it is also open to the gravest abuse; it can be misused with terrifying ease.

. . . A CLICHÉ BORN OF NECESSITY

In the early days, even the technical limitations of the camera were turned to artistic effect. Before the days when the laboratories had provided directors with easy lap-dissolves and the modern fade, the most common method of starting a sequence was by an ordinary iris-in. The method was, of course, that of the still-camera, not of the cine-camera, but in the hands of certain directors it was used to give artistic point to an opening shot.

It was found that this was achieved if the beginning of the expanding iris was centred on the most important object of the frame composition.

It is not possible to-day to justify this technique as it is now generally realised that the normal laws of pictorial composition do not apply to film work, and that the carefully

composed shot is the one most likely to destroy fluid continuity. But the clever use of this iris-in in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*—a film in which the pictorial composition was important to the atmosphere of the film—showed that here was a justifiable cliché, provided it fitted the scene and the situation. The limitation had been converted into a useful cliché, and the cliché only died when the limitation was removed by the laboratories.

Very early in the evolution of cinema it was realised that the camera could take the place of the human eye. The first development of this theory, which took place long before the Russians put it forward in their celluloid manifesto, *Man with the Movie Camera*, was the close-up.

For the close-up is no more than application of the idea that the human eye and the cine-camera both see things in a similar way, especially as far as perspective applies.

For years it was doubtful exactly what benefits the cine eye could contribute to the development of cinema. The fundamental question of what position the camera should take with regard to actors and story has not been answered, even to-day.

Most often the camera is in the position of the all-seeing eye—the same eye that sees everything on the three dimensional theatre stage, the eye of the spectator, not of the artist.

The eye has not been identified with a definite purpose or personality. That is the reason why to-day the camera is in a position little better than that of the television scanner, or the radio commentator. It has yet to be identified with the eye of the director or the script writer. Here is a cine cliché that is missing and must be supplied sooner or later.

It is clear that the camera can be made to take the position of an actual person, either for one shot, one sequence or for the whole film. In *Kameradschaft* you may remember the ghastly effect achieved by a blackout on the screen as the dug-out is blown in, and the wailing scream of the mutilated soldier—the camera *was* the mutilated soldier. Here is a technique which for some reason or other has never become a cliché, although it is very effective. I am told that the public would not understand it. Being a member of this sub-normal public myself, I believe that the film directors don't understand it!

I think that many cameramen and directors use these clichés without understanding that they have no point unless they fit the context.

"MOVEMENT CLICHÉS"

Next in order came the period when the Germans realised that the camera was not only an instrument fixed to tripod. It was really a human eye, endowed with potential movement. It could, to put it colloquially, "go places and see things".

As Rotha rightly points out it was men like Fritz Arno Wagner, Karl Freund, Karl Hoffmann, Gunther Rittau, Guido Seeber, Gunther Krampf, who gained for the camera the freedom of movement—only to lose it again when the slavery of the sound track was installed!

Jeanne Ney is the classic example of this technique—now a much abused cliché. The camera movement in this film was so clever and natural that the film cutter was not

given the job of patching together ill-conceived and non-consecutive shots as he so often is: he was given shots which blended because of their movement content. Each shot joined the preceding shot and the following shot logically and naturally. The whole film was an example of lap-dissolve on movement, without using the technical dissolve at all. (Each join was actually a cut, with all the effect and appearance of a dissolve.)

In *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, instead of showing a group of men in long shot and then individually, in successive, jumpy close-ups, the camera panned or trucked like a careful observer scanning the horizon through field glasses. This kept the whole group together, as a group, and yet studied the individual faces that made up that group.

What could be more natural than this technique? A general inspecting his troops *scans* the whole line of soldiers, and does not hop spasmodically from man to man. The pan and truck shots seem to me to be natural techniques, having their parallel in the method of the human eye for covering a wide field.

When the camera moves it must move steadily if the illusion of reality is to be preserved. If for artistic reasons the opposite effect is wanted, then the camera must move in an unnatural manner. The hectic jumpy shot and the fidgety cut can then come into their own. As an example: in Murnau's *Dracula* the shot of the phantom coach speeding through the woods was shot by a one turn: one picture method that exactly fitted the weird atmosphere of the rest of the film when projected.

It is the proper use of a cliché or a stock technique in its proper context that proves its true worth.

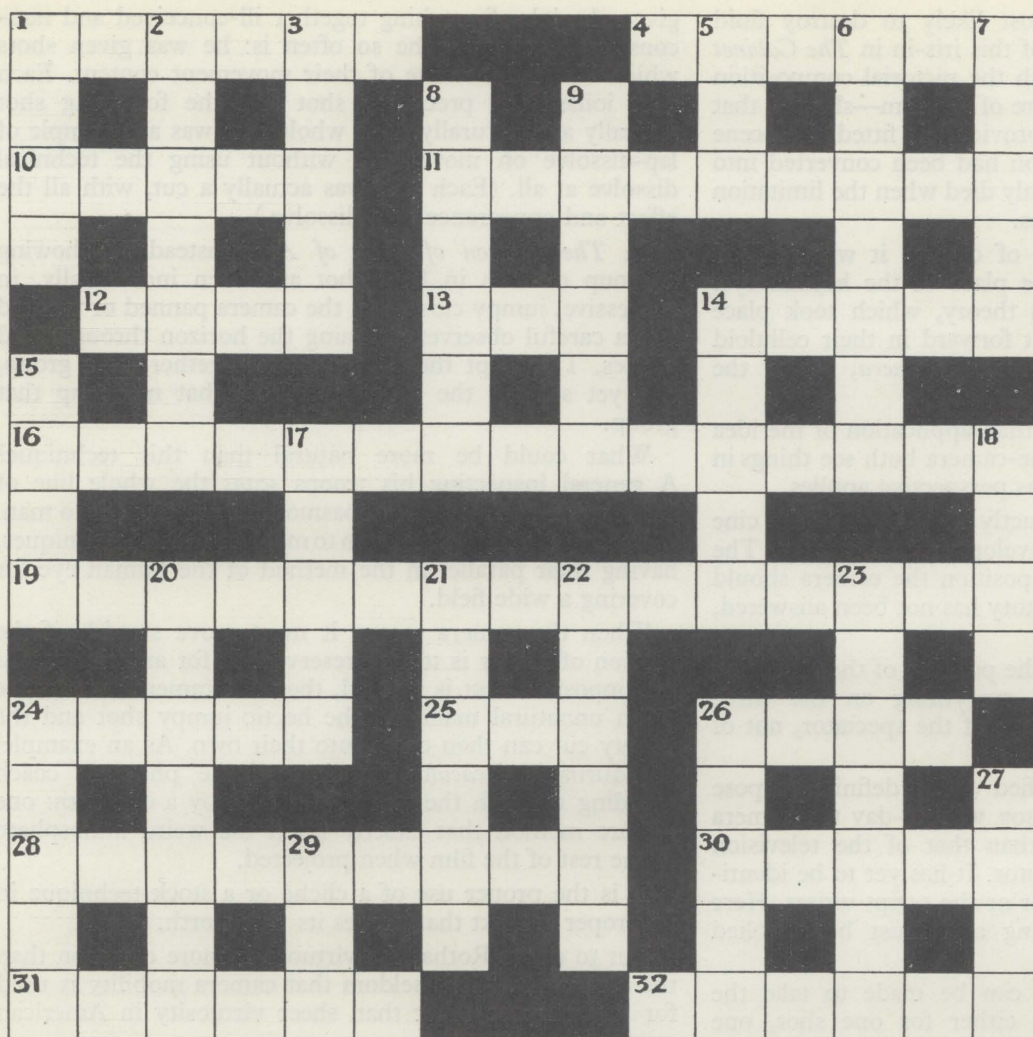
But to quote Rotha, the virtuoso is more common than the film artist. "It is seldom that camera mobility is used for any purpose other than sheer virtuosity in American movies."

This becomes all too obvious when you try to make a list of the films that have used the camera in an intelligent, naturalistic manner. *Mr. Deeds*, *Fury*, *The Good Earth*. My list ends there. In most films the pan and truck, clichés of camera movement, are used without due thought. Even in films of the calibre of *Henry VIII* it is debatable whether the camera was manipulated to the greatest advantage. I've studied *Henry VIII* in script and celluloid and still feel that the continuity was endangered by the camera movement, and the cutting.

For a business that is so proud that it is an industry and not art, it is, as Harry Damm would say, just "Damn bad management" to waste material—which is done every time an expensive set or a luxury artist is shot from the wrong angle.

The cine cliché then is a legitimate technique used in its proper context. In other words when it is used intelligently. There is no defence for virtuosity, a disregard of the cliché and its context.

It is to the debit of the virtuoso camera tricks that are constantly played that the cine cliché has fallen into disrepute, just as it was only their literary counterparts, the hacks of journalism, who brought discredit upon the literary cliché—a useful and expressive method of phrasing. If people would realise that clichés have their limitations but are indispensable for all that, we might get to the perfect film a little faster.



SIGHT & SOUND

Presents

A FILM CROSSWORD

Composed by

ARTHUR VESSELO

This puzzle should present no difficulties to the readers of SIGHT AND SOUND! To help you, the number of letters in the word or words forming the answers are given in brackets after each clue, but if you are completely defeated the correct solution is printed on the back page.

ACROSS.

- 1 Screen-composer; orchestral conductor in a related medium, but perhaps not by law (6).
- 4 Scene of a film made by Paul Rotha (6).
- 10 +5 rev. Its waters were troubled (and probably 13) in the G.P.O. film (5 and 3).
- 11 Inverted image cast by a kind of magic lantern (9).
- 12 Shows brilliant talents in the costliest art of all (the cinema, obviously) (4).
- 13 Oddly enough, Jack Frost's castle isn't (3).
- 14 Nearest thing to a theme-song in this of the 10 was "Mother Machree" (5).
- 16 "The Captains and the Kings . . ." This famous actor has been both (15).
- 19 Across the ringing plains of wild and woolly America, this vehicle carried chiefly J. Warren Kerrigan and Lois Wilson (15).
- 24 All sorts and conditions of 31 (5).
- 25 Walbrook-Novello beastie (3).
- 26 Members of this often end up by being 27—except those belonging to us, for *they* seem to go on for ever (4).
- 28 One of eight (9).
- 30 Rhythmic link (but only in the cinema) between time and Jekyll and Hyde (5).
- 31 All screen-12s are, but the reverse is obviously false (6).
- 32 A fatal one appeared in a film made by Chaplin for Keystone in 1914 (6).

DOWN.

- 1 Oriental common factor of star and cameraman (4).
- 2 This young screen-shiner is not far from a Scottish school (7).
- 3 +7 Second feminine item in a conventional screen-configuration (5 and 5).
- 5 If Vespasian had gone to the cinema he might have got a seat with this (3).
- 6 Victoria the Great was, of course; but the same applies even to Gert and Nan in a way (7).
- 7 See 3.
- 8 A disturbed island clinging to my tail was responsible for the first film-studio and over 4,000 films (6).
- 9 Christian name of actual wife of the talking Virginian's great screen-friend (6).
- 14 Pauline Lord was Mrs. this reversed (5).
- 15 Comes from the land where the Night Mails go (4).
- 17 Beware of losing these during projection, as the film goes from one 17 rev. to another (5).
- 18 When slightly confused, this lamp-post-leaning lady of nineteenth-century fiction is quite like the actress who played her in America (4).
- 20 One a week for early Elaine (7).
- 21 I grew a tiny creature Disney has not yet portrayed (6).
- 22 Dish between fish and joint for the performers in a recent French film? (6).
- 23 Do exhibitors always find this sort of release a happy one? (7).
- 24 If you look up to this faithful maiden of novel, stage and screen she certainly doesn't seem to be much of a liability (5).
- 26 Name given to contrast-factor of an emulsion (5).
- 27 "— sir!" But they probably don't say this in applauding the rushes (4).
- 29 Long one in *Things to Come*, introducing well-known screen-brothers (3).

THE SILENT FILM IN SCHOOLS

by FREDERIC EVANS, *Director of Education, Erith, Kent*

FOR MOST SCHOOL purposes the silent film is certainly adequate and, indeed, has many advantages. It is a profound error, I think, to attempt with school films to emulate or compete with the entertainment of the public cinema. The purposes of the film in schools and in cinemas are essentially different. This is fortunate since it would be quite impossible for schools to provide the expensive equipment with which the commercial cinema has to be supplied, nor for them to hire films of the highest entertainment value. The school and the commercial cinema have their distinct functions, complementary perhaps, but clearly distinct.

The purpose of the school cinema is two-fold. One aspect is the provision of apt and full illustration of the material selected for the school curriculum. The other is the enrichment of the children's experience or the filling in of their background of knowledge. We cannot all undertake the grand tour, but it ought to be possible for us all with the facilities which modern science has provided, to see the world pass before our eyes, to hear the sounds of the world, to see the myriad activities of mankind and to learn the essential facts of the great human family.

For this latter objective, the talking film is valuable although not essential. For this background work, if sound is used at all, it should be the real sounds associated with the situation and not a mere commentary. If the picture shows fishermen at work on the fishing banks, the sound accompaniment should be that of the waves, the clanking of tackle, the voices of the men, the cry of the seagulls—rather than the descriptions, even in the best B.B.C., of the commentator.

The sounds of a bazaar in the Far East, of a self binder working in the corn lands, of cattle on a ranch, of sheep on an Australian sheep run, of machinery in a great factory—these are worth recording in background pictures for schools. But how seldom is it done and how often these pictures are "sound" pictures only in the sense that the speech of a person *outside* them is reproduced as an after-thought and wedded in the studio to the original picture.

If sound films in schools can only do this, then they are not worth the extra expense as compared with silent films which can be shown in schools at half the cost or even less

of sound films. The correct commentator for any illustration used in a school is the teacher: not some canned voice using an unfamiliar accent and describing either in an excess of boredom or of enthusiasm the picture as it is unfolded in the film. One grave defect of many of these so-called sound films used in schools is a tendency to flippancy and facetiousness in the commentaries. Humour in schools has to be in tune with the particular situation and used with discretion.

How then can the silent film be best utilised to enrich the material in schools illustrative of the curriculum? First it has to be carefully selected to fit with the curriculum. This can be done by the service established by such bodies as the British Film Institute and the Central Information Bureau for Educational Films, wherein teachers are invited to send up their syllabuses in subjects like Geography Science, Natural History, etc., and receive in return details of suitable films available of different sizes, length and character with the prices of their hire. And in this fitting of film illustration to syllabuses, there is a far greater range of silent films, or films which can be used as silent films of all sizes to draw from. Apt and pertinent illustration is of vastly greater educational value than illustration not quite on the point. A silent film which fits the curriculum exactly and shown even without comment is far more effective than a sound film which is not in close conformity with the matter dealt with by the teacher in his lessons. I speak here of illustrative rather than background films.

If with each silent film there is filed a brief, accurate and well associated statement of the factual material illustrated and this could be made available to the teacher using the film, then he is provided with exactly the information he requires to be able to use that film effectively in the school. I wish to emphasise this point of description. At all costs the attitude of the mere "looker on" must be avoided. The correct names of the things shown must be given and the whole information accurately associated. For example in a film of coal mines a commentary by the teacher something like this:

"That is a coal tub; it is being filled by the coal being brought from the coalface by a rubber conveyor belt . . ." and so on, is much to be preferred to a patronising "Deep

	England and Wales							Scotland							Grand Totals
	9.5mm	16mm. silent	9.5 & 16mm.	16mm. sound	35mm. silent	35mm. sound	Totals	9.5mm	16mm. silent	9.5 & 16mm.	16mm. sound	35mm. silent	35mm. sound	Totals	
Preparatory, Primary, Senior Elementary and Central Schools	164	289	91	89	73	10	716	9	153	9	4	1	—	176	892
Secondary Schools	24	107	24	76	29	17	277	10	52	4	12	2	—	80	357
Technical Colleges, Universities, etc.	4	71	16	19	23	12	145	—	14	6	3	5	—	28	173
L.E.A.'s for general use	1	71	21	27	1	—	121	6	38	4	4	—	—	52	173
Totals	193	538	152	211	126	39	1259	25	257	23	23	8	—	336	1595

in the bowels of the earth toil the miners who provide coal for our fires, our factories and our ships." In these commentaries a spade should be called a spade and the description confined to accurate detail as the picture unfolds itself. A realist non-sentimental attitude is the most suitable one in a commentary upon a silent film.

The above implies that the teacher himself gives the commentary. In a classroom using perhaps a silent 16mm. film, he need only speak in his natural teaching voice. But if a large hall is used to exhibit silent films to a larger group than a class, then some kind of speech amplifier is desirable. It is quite easy to connect a microphone to a radiogram and use this for the amplification of the teacher's remarks. The microphone should be connected to the gramophone pick up terminals. Another method is to use a second loud speaker as the microphone and connect it up similarly with the radiogram.

One great teaching advantage to this method of using silent films is that it is essential for the teacher to see the film himself before the display. This is in order for him to appreciate the points to be made as the picture "marches on." If he has to prepare or adapt his own commentary, a preview of the film is clearly necessary.

A further point is that statements coming from the teacher will carry more weight than those made by the "canned" voice. The teacher can adapt the commentary to the intelligence of his hearers. He can link up his remarks with what he knows the children have learnt before, and after the film has been shown he can with more confidence and greater understanding discuss with his class the lessons of the pictures they have just seen. The teacher also gains in prestige if he speaks his own commentaries, whilst he loses something of this when an unknown voice does it for him.

There are in the country literally thousands of disused silent projectors of 35mm. type discarded by the commercial cinemas on the advent of the talkies. These can be obtained at a tithe of the cost of modern sound apparatus. In the Erith schools there are three such projectors which were given *free* by cinema proprietors. They are proving invaluable for use with the illustrative film. In one case the transformer equipment was also given free, this being necessary to convert the town supply of alternating current into direct current for the arc lamps used in the projectors. In two cases school halls have been built with safe projection houses and rewinding rooms at one end and the dramatic stages at the other fitted with screens which can be rolled up out of sight behind the pelmet of the proscenium curtains.

Schools need not therefore feel that the silent projector is out of date for them. Indeed, as will be seen, it has for teaching purposes alone, many advantages.

The Amplification and Distribution of Sound.
A. E. Greenless, A.M.I.E.E.
Chapman & Hall. 10s. 6d.

This short treatise on the fundamental problems of sound amplification will be welcomed by all engineers concerned with the maintenance or modification of radio or public address equipment. To the film technician its appeal will be less direct because the installations which are dealt with in detail here assume that the input signals are derived from radio transmitter, microphone or disc.

Its practical usefulness is enhanced by a clear style, an abundance of diagrammatic illustrations and an index.

FILMS AND THE FAITH By A. Douglas Wing.
S.P.C.K. 3s. 6d. Reviewed by the Rev. F. Heming Vaughan.

This little handbook, published by the S.P.C.K., is a welcome sign that interest in the use of the film for religious purposes is growing. The churches have been slow to realise that the invention of the sound film is a major fact in education, akin to the discovery of printing. The scholastic world is increasingly alive to its possibilities, and if religious education is to keep abreast of the times it, too, must welcome the aid of the film for the "Teaching of the Word."

Such a powerful instrument of expression, presenting its own technical problems, demands the best expert advice if the churches are to employ this medium with cultural intelligence. A great deal more thinking is required, even by those at present interested, judging by this book, if the religious film is to appeal to a generation accustomed to the technical excellence of the secular film. This is not to belittle Mr. Wing's contribution. He writes as an enthusiastic amateur and what he has to say about his own experiences in showing films will be of assistance to beginners. But the opening chapters are most disconcerting. They profess to answer the question how the Church can use films. The treatment is, however, so scrappy, and so mixed up with irrelevant and shallow assertions about the cinema that the result is irritation rather than enlightenment.

Mr. Wing is obsessed, like most advocates of religious films, with dramatising Biblical stories and Church History without any apparent appreciation of the enormous difficulties and expense involved in any successful reconstruction of the past. For one thing the camera is merciless in its presentation, as the frontispiece of the *Good Samaritan* shows. The incongruity of this scene provokes simply mirth. The Church would be on surer ground if it concentrated its film enterprise on religious documentaries, in the way the English school of documentary film producers have been made famous with *Night Mail* or *North Sea*. If the Church could be inspired to create a Church Film Unit on the lines of the G.P.O. Film Unit and bring alive on the screen the scene of our contemporary religious life it would do more for religion than all the reproductions of Biblical scenes made or contemplated. The material is all ready to hand. A striking example is mentioned by Mr. Wing. It is the Diocesan film exhibiting the need for churches in Manchester's new housing areas. One can well understand the appeal of such a film. Here is something only the film can do.

The chapter headed "Devotional Films" is most unconvincing. The objections to showing films in church as part of a religious service are strong and are based on sounder psychology than Mr. Wing offers. Those interested should read the section, Art as Amusement, in Professor R. G. Collingwood's "The Principles of Art." It is doubtful whether sacred story films can ever escape the trail of "a mere cinema show." They may be popular for a time, like Services of Sacred Song, but their connection with worship and the direction of the will is of the flimsiest.

It looks as if it would be much wiser to keep the Church service clear of the film and equip the parish hall where the film can do a great work.

THE LIBRARIAN SPEAKS

You, personally, may be the perfect borrower of films. But all over England there are people who cause the managers of libraries to tear their hair. Read on if you would find out how to create a perfect world

By the Librarian, Educational and General Services, Ltd.

The film librarian depends in some measure upon the co-operation of those who hire films for the smooth and efficient running of the film library.

Some examples of the ways in which hirers can help are set out below:—

1. By making known as far ahead as possible the films and the dates on which they are required for use. This would in most cases prevent disappointment arising from films not being available when required, and the necessity of choosing other films as substitutes.
2. When there are sound and silent versions of a particular film, a clear statement of what is required should be given when the requisition for film hire is made.
3. Films should be returned to the library at the earliest possible convenience after use. Cases where subsequent hirers have not received films on time, owing to the delay caused by the retention of the films on the part of the previous hirer after use, would thereby be averted.
4. Films are frequently damaged by scratches. This could be readily prevented if the precaution was taken each time the projector is used to examine the gate and all parts in which the film comes in contact, and to make quite certain that they are free from grit or any loose substance. Care should be taken by hand trial first that the film is properly threaded so that when the film runs through the projector the loop is not lost.

An immediate report on any serious damage to the perforations or sound track of a film caused by a fault in the projector would be greatly appreciated by the librarian. Users should refrain from repairing films which have been damaged in this way as the films are much more difficult to examine when sections have been removed and the film joined together again.

These suggestions if adopted by all users of films, would have the effect of rendering to the librarian very useful and valuable assistance.

By the Librarian, Ensign Film Library.

One of the chief difficulties in receiving an application for film hire from a school or educational authority is that with educational films it is very often difficult for an alternative to be given. Consequently, it is essential that films required for teaching purposes should be booked well in

advance of the date for which they are required—at least seven days.

It is the practice of many authorities and schools to forward at the beginning of the term a complete programme of films for each subject for use on varying dates during the term.

It is sometimes not realised that when films are required for different dates, that the department have to make out an application form for each one; it is not always possible therefore, to advise the subscriber for several days as to whether the films booked are available on the various dates for which they are required. It would, therefore, considerably assist if the programme for each date was sent in on a separate application form, which are available free of charge for this purpose.

It is also very important that films should not be retained for longer than the time for which they are booked, for whilst the subscriber is quite willing to pay for the additional hire, another subscriber—owing to the late return of the films to the library—has been let down and considerably inconvenienced through our inability to send these particular films in time, and although there are several copies of practically every subject, they may also be out on hire for the same period.

Lastly, great care should be taken in threading the film on the machine, as subscribers are liable for any damage caused.

All films should be returned on the library's own reels.

The gate of the projector should be cleaned before each film, and be reasonable in the use of "still" pictures, as an excessive time on one frame will cause the film to "buckle" and lose focus.

By the Film Manager of the "Gebescope Library."

Running a successful film library is like skippering a fast transatlantic liner; it calls for complete co-operation between skipper, commander and crew, only in the library's case the skipper is the film manager, the commander the librarian, and the crew enthusiastic staff! Each has a responsibility to the other, to provide a smooth-running organisation, and the customers have carefully to observe their rules.

The rules are simple, and easily carried out given a minimum of thought and attention. They can, in fact, be given entirely under five headings, as follows:—

1. Order in advance. This means simply what it says, so that the librarian may confirm a booking, or "regret" as the case may be.
2. Give three alternatives to the preferred selection. Unlike books, even the biggest film library can only stock a limited number of copies of a popular subject.
3. Never retain your copy beyond the express period booked, as by so doing somebody else may be let down.
4. Small damage can be forgiven, but where a full reel or a large part of one is damaged there is no excuse. The slightest care will ensure that the operator examines the film when leaving the top spool and compares with the bottom spool, thereby spotting anything wrong immediately.
5. Routine care of the machine, i.e. oiling, cleaning, bearings running free, adjusting and so forth. A little system here is the key to freedom from all mechanical troubles.

Here then are the cardinal rules that make a film manager's life a happy one and enable a film library to give customers the best possible service. They are simple and easily remembered. In fact it would be easy entirely to memorise all five, word for word.

By the Manager, Kodascope Library.

"*Always return films on the date due.*" The day may yet come when I shall have these words spliced into every film at regular intervals, for this rule is undoubtedly vital to the smooth running of any library.

The paramount point members should remember is that delay on their part often causes other members serious inconvenience and ultimately reacts on themselves. When films are returned by borrowers beyond the date they are due for return, other members have to be disappointed and so my main plea to all library users is: "Remember that you would be disappointed and annoyed if the films you booked were delayed—don't disappoint and annoy others by failing to return those *you* hire in good time."

Other points to remember are:

Library members should order films well in advance by letter, *not* by telephone.

An alternative list of requirements should be given in case first choice is not available.

The librarian should be permitted to interchange films ordered for a series of dates, if necessary.

Before inserting film into projector gate, the borrower should make sure the claws are retracted.

Before switching on the motor, he should satisfy himself that the sprockets are engaging the film properly. This can be ascertained by giving the motor a few turns by hand.

Hired films should always be rewound on the library reels supplied.

Films should be replaced in the correct cans.

Any damage should be reported by placing a note in the can.

By the Librarian, National Film Library Loan Section.

1. By applying for films as far in advance as possible and always, where practicable, giving an alternative choice. Observation of this rule would really assist the borrowers themselves more than the library since it would help to prevent disappointment. Substandard films from all the libraries are in considerable demand, and the borrower who applies for a film two days before he wants to use it is unusually fortunate if he gets the film he wants. The inclusion of an alternative selection may save unnecessary correspondence and delay.

2. By applying on the application forms prepared by the library which are sent to all members upon request. Letters are sometimes received asking, perhaps, for *The Great Train Robbery* without even specifying whether a 35 mm. or a 16 mm. copy is required. This again involves unnecessary correspondence and delay. The application form provides for all the details which the library wishes to have and should be filled up as fully as possible. Furthermore, borrowers will find it a good deal easier to use than writing a letter.

3. By not cutting off the leader strips at either end of the film. Film societies which like to have the films joined up together on one large spool so as to obtain a continuous

show are most apt to do this. The leader strips are often lost and this causes trouble and expense to the library. The National Film Library is willing to join up films exactly as the borrower wishes, before their dispatch.

4. By examining the projector carefully before the running of each film, making sure that the sprocket wheels and the gate are quite clean. Omission to do this probably results in more damage to films than any other cause. A small speck of dirt or grit in the gate can plough a furrow in the surface of the film from one end to the other and make it totally unfit for further use. When it is realised that the cost of replacement of every reel of film so spoilt may be anything between £2. 10s and £5 the importance of this will be understood.

5. By threading the film carefully and making sure that it engages properly with the teeth of the sprocket wheels. Films are often returned with sprocket teeth marks down the centre of the film.

6. By not attempting to repair any damage to the film, if in spite of these precautions it should occur, unless the film has to be shown again and it is absolutely essential to make a repair. This may seem to some a peculiar request, but it is made for two reasons. Firstly, in order to make a repair a section of the film may have to be cut out. If this is done by the user, the library's film examiner may not notice that a break has occurred and he may therefore be unable to check up on any missing section. Secondly, although some borrowers are capable of making a good join, others, unfortunately, are not and it is far more satisfactory to leave the job to the expert hands of the library's staff.

7. By packing films carefully when they are returned. Occasionally films arrive with the wrapping falling off.

8. By returning films on their original spools or at least on spools in satisfactory condition and in their proper tins.

9. By returning films to the library from which they came. Where people borrow films from several libraries it occasionally happens that in returning them they mix them up and send films to wrong addresses.

10. By returning films immediately after use. This is perhaps the most important rule of all, because, firstly, it is the one most frequently broken and secondly, it is the one upon which the efficiency of the library's service most depends. All libraries are taking in bookings on a large number of films for a considerable period ahead, and they accept as many bookings as possible on a particular film allowing for a definite interval for the dispatch and return of each film. If a borrower is a day late in returning his films it will frequently mean that some other borrower, who may perhaps have booked the film weeks, or even months beforehand, must at the last minute be disappointed.

Amateur Cinematographer's Diary, 1939.

Link House Publications Ltd. 2s. 6d., 3s. and 3s. 6d.

The amateur cinematographer will have cause to welcome once more the appearance of this encyclopædic yet sufficiently slim little volume. Unlike the traditional sundial which "only counts the sunny hours" it will provide him with data for shooting in lighting conditions of all kinds. If it is not unfair to find fault with so excellent a production, the list of projectors included might invite criticism as it is by no means complete.

TRAINING FILM TASTE IN AMERICA

ERNEST DYER, *who has just returned from the United States, tells you what they are doing about Film Appreciation there. Some things impressed him—some didn't*

GOVERNOR MILLIKEN, Secretary of the Hays Office, said that probably 5,000,000 children in American schools are receiving some form of instruction in film appreciation. Charles Hoban, director of the film project of the American Council on Education, said that at least 20,000 schools are giving courses in film appreciation. Edgar Dale, of Ohio State University, said that 20,000 copies of his classroom textbook, *How to Appreciate Motion Pictures*, are in use.

On the face of it there seems to be a field of activity from which we in Britain might learn. But what exactly are these "forms of instruction in film appreciation"? What are they worth? Do they represent a real attempt to help children to shop critically for their film entertainment, and to get the best, intellectually and aesthetically, out of the films they see? Or are they so much advertising ballyhoo imposed on a naïve profession by an astute industry? I did not have time to learn all the answers, but here are my guesses.

In the first place it is undeniable that educationists in the States are more generally persuaded than educationists here that some form of training in "movie-discrimination" is desirable. This may be due partly to the influence on American thought of the Payne Fund studies, partly to the fact that the work in American schools is more closely related to the activities of the community, and partly to greater liberality of mind. Almost without exception the educationists whom I met thought that such training was necessary not only for the enrichment of the child as an individual but for his conditioning as a citizen of a democracy. Such convictions have found corporate expression. The Californian State Congress of Parents and Teachers has for the past two years passed resolutions demanding that "photoplay appreciation" be incorporated in the curriculum of public schools. The National Congress of Parents and Teachers has published a first-class pamphlet on the subject. The National Council of Teachers of English has published numerous papers and one complete book describing actual teaching techniques. The Directors of Visual Education of numerous states and cities have issued handbooks of suggestions and recommendations to their teachers. The Federal Office of Education devotes a section of its booklet on "School Use of Visual Aids" to the "teaching of motion-picture appreciation", which it defines as "the art of determining what constitutes a good motion picture, and of enhancing enjoyment of it."

There appear to be three main ways in which such teaching is introduced into the schools—by formal courses on the art and social purpose of the film, by the formation of "photoplay appreciation" clubs, by instruction as a regular part of the ordinary work in English. Something may be briefly said about each.

FORMAL COURSES IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

1. The establishment of formal courses on the film is made easier by the system whereby the pupil in American high schools selects his own courses from a wide range of

options. At the same time, because of this wide range of alternatives available, such courses normally attract only a tiny minority of the pupils. They are, however, valuable because they enable experimental techniques of teaching to be evolved. I have on my desk as I write a number of detailed syllabuses for such courses and they are full of ideas and suggestions that I shall be able to employ in a variety of ways and in quite different contexts in my own teaching. There is one particularly "meaty" syllabus of a six-weeks course carried out by a unit in a Cleveland school, with a valuable section on the analysis of film "blurbs" and the evaluation of critiques. The establishment of these courses in schools follows upon the heels of their development in the universities. Harvard, Yale, Stanford and Dartmouth now recognise the existence of the film as an art-form. The University of Southern California has a complete Department of Cinematography under Dr. Morkovin. At Minnesota, Weaver has been responsible for an excellent syllabus on the æsthetic foundations of film, and Wendt and Kissack have devised a course which makes its points by showing good and bad films side by side. (Kissack also runs shows of good films for the benefit of the campus generally, and gets 2,500 students a week to attend an hour of specially-edited newsreels. Similarly at Ohio State University, in addition to lectures on film to a relatively small group, there are weekly exhibitions of such films as *Pasteur*, *Zola*, *They Won't Forget*, which attract an aggregate annual audience of 60,000.) At New York University, Dr. Thrasher runs a well-known series of lectures in connection with the Education Department. ("The course has been officially accepted by the New York City Board of Education for salary increment.") Dr. Potter organises courses—both academic and popular—at Columbia University, and altogether in the Metropolitan area last winter there were eighteen courses on the cinema available to teachers and university students.

PHOTOPLAY APPRECIATION CLUBS

2. The numerous "photoplay appreciation clubs" in high schools are less easy to assess. The Federal Department of Education says that "in these clubs the pupils not only investigate the nature of forthcoming films and discuss the merits of the ones they attend, but read extensively about motion pictures and sometimes correspond with motion-picture stars and producers." The activities of some of them might be described as uncritical fan-slush. Others do make serious attempts to study film technique. Some of them have developed film-production units, making newsreels of school activities, or films on health, safety, agriculture and instructional processes. Altogether there are 575 motion-picture cameras reported in use in American schools. Machinery is being evolved for the interchange of films and experience between schools, and last year there was held at Ohio State University the first State Conference on school-made films. Not all of these films, however, are made by photoplay clubs: many are made within the school curriculum.

3. Instruction as a regular part of the work in English has developed partly out of a realisation that pupils acquire a mastery of oral and written expressions most readily when they are discussing things rooted in their own experience, partly out of lessons on dramatic and literary form. One Californian teacher puts it like this: "In literature we have long taught students to increase their enjoyment and understanding of poetry, novels and dramas. In music and art students have learned to develop tastes for good music and good art. In other words, they have learned not only to discover what is best, but to prefer it. They have developed standards by which they can tell the difference between good poems and poor poems, good music and poor music, good art and poor art. And that is just what we are trying to do in teaching motion-picture appreciation—to tell them the difference between good pictures and bad pictures. Thus we have arrived at our definition of appreciation—to enjoy with understanding." The Federal Department of Education suggests that topics for discussion should include: the need for the selection of films, the kinds of information acquired from films, the difference between the stage and screen in telling a story, the treatment of historical characters. It says that there should be "much discussion, the pupils being given opportunity to express their opinions and defend their judgments. By group analysis and criticism, standards will be set up and some basis for judging films evolved. . . . The teacher's responsibility is to help the students select the motion pictures they patronise more wisely and to evaluate them more critically." Some teachers have turned these academic phrases into the slogans—"Shop for Your Movies"; "See More in Your Movies."

Two documents are specially worth quoting in this connection. One is a booklet issued by the Department of Public Instruction for Pennsylvania. It defines four aims in the teaching of film appreciation:

1. To aid the pupil to develop a worth-while and well-planned recreational life. "The school has already taken responsibility in the fields of sports, reading, music, dramatics. It has not yet adequately defined or used its opportunities in regard to Press, radio and movies."
2. To aid pupils to understand the power which the films have in influencing knowledge, attitudes, emotions and conduct.
3. To aid the pupil to develop criteria and methods for selecting desirable films to attend—by the study of the better reviews, for example.
4. To train pupils to evaluate films from the point of view of their artistic and social value.
 "This will involve discussion of the history of movies, plot, acting, photography, settings, sound, dialogue, music, direction. Further, the student must learn to evaluate the goals and activities of the leading characters in the film. He must constantly ask: Were these goals adequate? Satisfactory for life in the twentieth century? Did the characters act intelligently? Did the film give a true picture of American or foreign life? Did it deal with important life problems, or was it confined to narrowly personal problems?"

The other document is the pamphlet issued by the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. It remarks that

"many persons do not really see what is in the film, nor do they hear with discernment the skilful way in which dialogue and sound effects and music are sometimes presented. Your problem, as parents and teachers, is to develop in children the seeing eye and the hearing ear.

"We must remember that we get out of a film only what we put into it. To many, going to the films is a narrow experience. They see something of the acting, only a little of the beauty of the settings; it is the story primarily that draws their attention.

And yet this is not a complete experience as far as the films are concerned.

"Truly to experience films, we need not only the richness that comes from an understanding of acting and story, but also that which relates to photography and settings, to dialogue and sound effects, to direction. To gain that experience requires study."

All of which sounds fine, but what relation has it to what is actually being done in the schools? The editor of the most important educational film journal in the States gave it to me as his view that "motion-picture appreciation" in America consists merely of mulling over in class whatever stuff the children may have chanced to see in the theatres—good, mediocre or worse. It is like teaching appreciation of the novel and including wild-west thrillers, "dime-novels", penny dreadfuls and newspaper serials on the literature course and solemnly evaluating them along with Dickens and Thackeray. That much of the work is quite uncritical is evident, too, from the pompous volume on *Photoplay Appreciation* published by the National Council of Teachers of English. Possibly this volume would have been more convincing had anyone ever taught the National Council how to write English which an Englishman could read, but as it stands it is often ludicrous in its naïvete. I wish that I had room to quote examples of its style, with its use of nouns for adjectives, and of its unconscious humour, when teachers describe the model lessons they have given. ("My second topic question was: Who are Ann Harding and Leslie Howard?" "The fifth topic: I asked the following question: Does the picture emphasise the value of loving a woman without marriage?") Some of it makes one wonder what else American schools have to do with their time. (One teacher describes how she spent three whole days discussing *I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*—one day in looking up the facts of the case in the Press; one day in evaluating the film according to a critical scale of qualities; a third day discussing prison reform.)

STUDY-GUIDES

With these lessons developing in the schools and with the bulk of the teachers knowing nothing whatever about the subject there is a growing demand for materials from which to teach it. "Film Guides", "Group Discussion Guides"—booklets dealing with current feature films—pour from the presses. The best-known series—described to me by the Superintendent of Schools of one of America's greatest cities as "indispensable"—are produced by Education and Recreational Study Guides, under the Managing Editorship of William Lewin, the author of the book on *Photoplay Appreciation* referred to above. Many of them are compiled by leading teachers of English, and they are "recommended by the Motion Picture Committee of the Department of Secondary Education of the National Education Association." Most of them seemed to me to be little more than publicity blurbs. Most of the material is supplied by the studios and the industry finances the publication. Some of them deal with films not worth wasting time over in class; most of them are critical only on points of detail; they never think of challenging the major assumptions of the films they describe (the booklet on *The Charge of the Light Brigade* is a masterpiece of complacency); and only rarely do they contain questions of value for an understanding of film form. They represent a triumphant exploitation by the Hays Office of the gullibility of the teaching profession.

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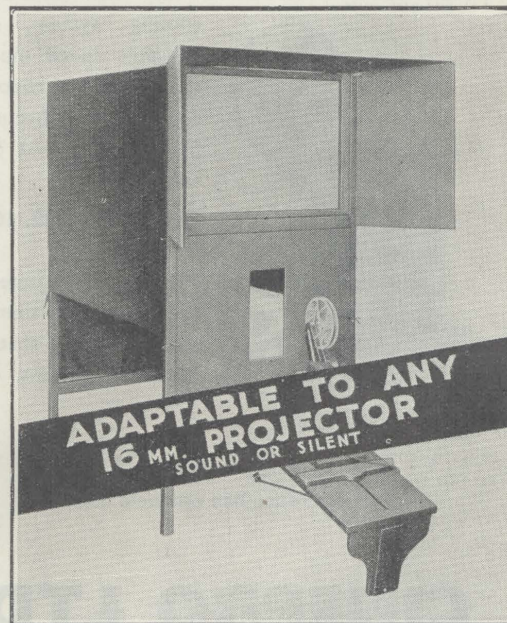
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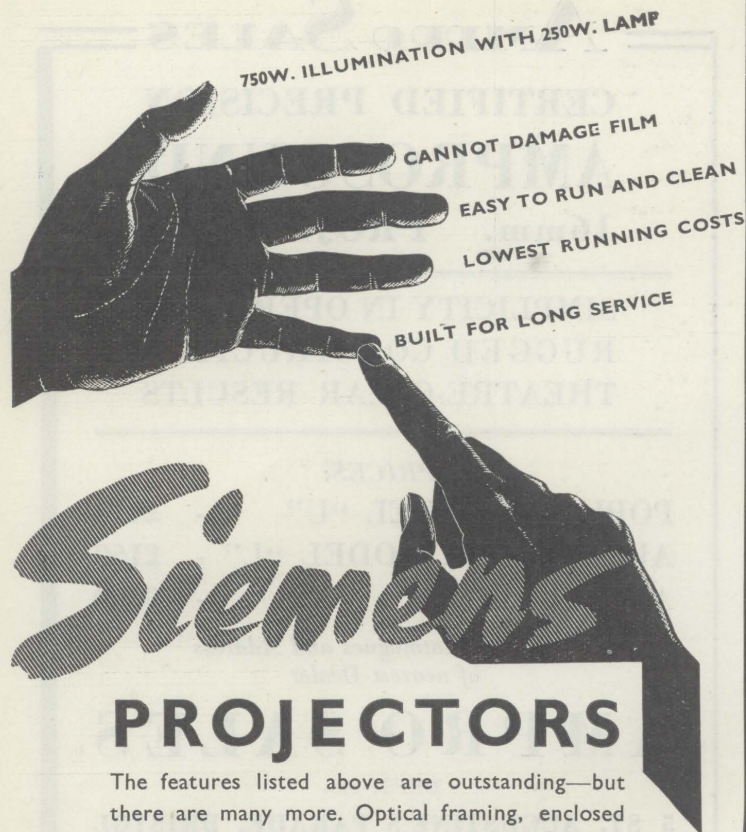
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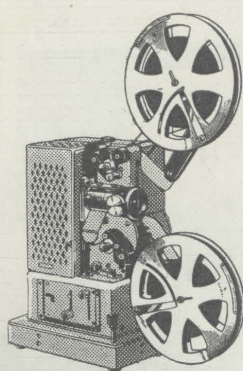
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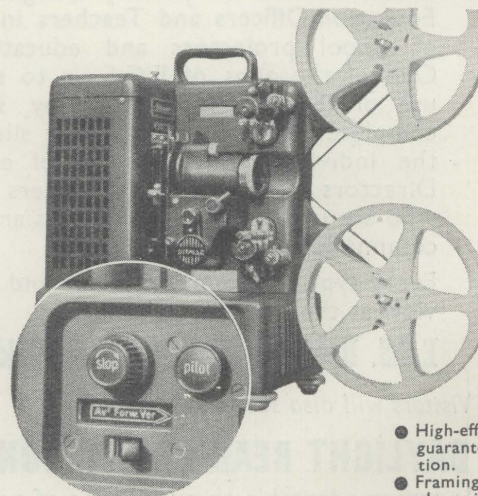
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The best study-guide I saw in America was the fifty-page booklet issued by the National Emergency Council to accompany *The Plow that Broke the Plains*. It contained a first-class discussion of documentary film. *The March of Time* issues intelligently-prepared material to accompany each release—an eight-page news-sheet called *Photo-Reporter* and a detailed *Manual for Class Discussion*. These are being used in about 10,000 classes, and have a total circulation of 500,000.

FILM RECOMMENDATION

The Federal Office of Education says that reports from schools with enrolments totalling 17,000,000 (representing 95 per cent of the urban school population and 75 per cent of the total) show that over 80 per cent of the schools "encourage attendance at selected motion pictures." On what do the teachers in these schools base their recommendations? All I can do is to list the sources of information on which they may base them.

Apart from the professional newspaper reviewers (who are first-class in New York and not much good, as a rule, outside) there are legions of amateur reviewers. At the head is the National Board of Review, with its magazine, its *Weekly Guide to Selected Pictures*, and its *Weekly Official Bulletin*. This "volunteer citizen body", working hand in hand with the Better Films National Council, performs some of the functions performed in England by the B.F.I. It finds itself attacked on two flanks—by the Quigley element in the industry (Quigley runs the red-baiting *Motion Picture Herald* and preaches continually that "films should entertain, not educate"), and on the other side by the educational reformers, who accuse the Board of shadow-boxing with the industry. As a rival to the Board the Hays Office has organised the East and West Coast Pre-View Groups. These consist of representatives of numerous social organisations who view the films before release, issue reviews and recommendations to their own members, and also agree upon joint estimates. The organisations include The American Library Association (for libraries in many cities play a big part in publicising outstanding films), the Californian Congress of Parents and Teachers, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the American Association of University Women (the most intelligent of the lot), the Y.M.C.A., the Boy Scouts of America, and several others. Their findings have some weight, for many of their members are active in the Better Films Councils which exist in some 6,000 towns. (Hays estimates that 500,000 women are engaged in the local work of these Councils). Then the reviews and recommendations and suitability gradings are published in more than 500 newspapers, including the great metropolitan dailies, and broadcast regularly from more than 100 radio stations. But, by and large, they are terribly complacent, and the industry regards them with amused tolerance. Teachers are able to supplement these estimates by reviews published in such journals as *Scholastic* (which also issues "rating-cards" to encourage children to make their own evaluations) and *Educational Screen*, which publishes a special subscription service of reviews. Available to Catholics are the recommendations—and prohibitions—of the National Legion of Decency. A new independent reviewing body that is not afraid to speak its own mind is Associated Film Audiences, which publishes *Film Survey*. Its aim is to mobilise support for films that

uphold the causes of democracy and peace, and numerous social and religious organisations are affiliated to it. Summaries of the professional newspaper reviews are available in *Motion Picture Preview Digest* and—in tabulated form—in *Consumer's Digest*.

But the average teacher needs some assistance if he is to pick his way through these various pressure groups and if he is to obtain material for his work without falling a victim to the wiles of the trade. A neat compromise is being worked out, it seemed to me, in Los Angeles. Here the City Board of Education circulates to the schools ammunition of various kinds. It consists partly of "photoplay appreciation material" issued by the Hays Office and by the big film companies, but which has been critically examined and "vetted" before being passed on, partly of specimen schemes of work evolved by individual teachers and specimen reviews written by students and (most important of all) of a fortnightly guide to selected films, which is admirably done, drawing attention both to the factual and dramatic content of the films and to niceties and crudities in their direction. I like, too, the covering letter under which the Superintendent sends it round. "Whether we of the schools like it or not," he writes, "it is a fact that the large majority of our pupils are being strongly influenced in their emotional and intellectual lives, in their ethical and spiritual development, during the hours they spend in picture theatres. We have long recognised that the schools cannot ignore this influence. Our only recourse is to work with rather than against it."

IN MEMORIAM

Quietly in the middle of Wembley suburbia, Oscar Werndorff died. One evening paper gave the news of his death last November two lines. Yet in their time his films were criticised at full-page length.

Vaudeville (1925) and *Metropolis* (1926) will always be remembered. His only important English film as far as the set design was concerned was *The Bells*, in which the sets were the most imaginative of any British film yet made.

For Werndorff was a true film architect. His sets were not only related to reality; they foretold the future with amazing skill. Werndorff had a vivid imagination: in *Metropolis* he foretold television. In his private life he foretold the coming of Hitler and cleared out of Germany before the Nazi regime came into power. He was a voluntary exile in this country, and one can appreciate what this meant.

For many of us the days of the old silent German films were the most stirring of all cinema experience. For cinema was being born and it was men like Werndorff who gave it an intelligent education. It was men like him who saw to it that it had the best of technical care, and the greatest imaginative attention that they could muster. It was men like Werndorff who must take the credit for inventing techniques and methods that are the clichés of Hollywood and Denham. Tricks of the camera which look so easy to-day and which we take for granted were worked out with great skill and imagination by Werndorff and his associates. The film industry will never produce a greater art director.

W.E.D.

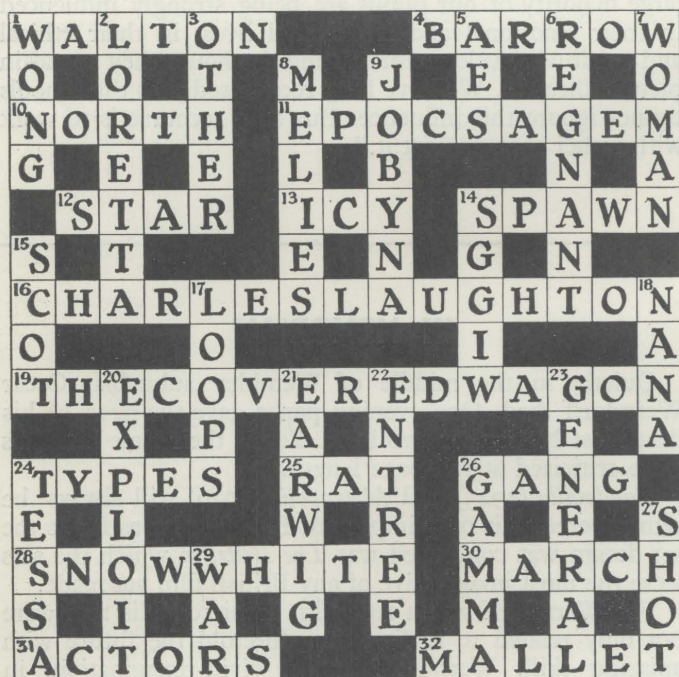
TECHNICAL NOTE

FILM PRESERVING PROCESSES

A large number of 16mm. films cause their owners special anxiety because of the fact that they are colour prints which cannot be copied or reversal prints from which no master-copy has been made.

No print which is used regularly for projection will, of course, last for ever, but the evil day when it becomes too scratched to be presentable may be considerably postponed by having the copy treated with a coating or hardening process. "Poliwax" and "Recono" are two coating processes which give good results and "Vaporate" is a remarkable hardening process which is applied to the reeled-up film by means of gas treatment in a sealed chamber. These processes will not, it need hardly be added, guard against damage due to lost loops or careless threading, but they do substantially prolong the resistance of the film to fair wear and tear.

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TECHNICAL ARTICLES

The papers containing the articles mentioned below may be seen at the Institute's premises by arrangement.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Using Super XX; Harris B. Tuttle (*Movie Makers*, December). Fundamentals of Color Measurement; D. L. MacAdam (*S.M.P.E. Journal*, October).

Theory of Three-Color Photography; A. C. Hardy (*S.M.P.E. Journal*, October).

A Novel Surgical Filming Stand; A. Lenard (*S.M.P.E. Journal*, October).

A Technic for Testing Photographic Lenses; W. C. Miller (*S.M.P.E. Journal*, November).

PROJECTION

A Higher-Efficiency Condensing System for Tungsten Filament Projectors; F. E. Carlson (*International Projectionist*, October).

Choosing a Screen; Jackson Hackett (*Movie Makers*, December).

SOUND

Electrical Networks for Sound Recording; F. L. Hopper (*S.M.P.E. Journal*, November).

Multiple-Channel Recording; H. G. Tasker (*S.M.P.E. Journal*, October).

Sound Pictures in Auditory Perspective; F. L. Hunt (*S.M.P.E. Journal*, October).

Application of Electrical Networks to Sound Recording and Reproducing; H. R. Kimball (*S.M.P.E. Journal*, October).

TELEVISION

Television and its Effect Upon the Motion Picture Theatre; Frank Waldrop and Joseph Borkin (*International Projectionist*, October).

A Non-Intermittent Projector for Television Film Transmission; H. S. Bamford (*S.M.P.E. Journal*, November).

MISCELLANEOUS

An Improved Editing Machine; J. L. Spence (*S.M.P.E. Journal*, November).

The Language of Lighting; (*International Projectionist*, October).

S.O.S.

Number nine of SIGHT & SOUND (Spring, 1934) is out of print. Would any readers having copies of this number to dispose of get in touch with us?

Also copies of the MONTHLY FILM BULLETIN Nos. 44, 50 and 52 are badly wanted.

DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Nearly one thousand documentary films are contained in the "List of British and Foreign Documentary and other short films" just published by the British Film Institute. The booklet contains a short synopsis of each film and full details as to length, distributors, etc. The price is 2s. 6d. from the Institute, 4 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1.

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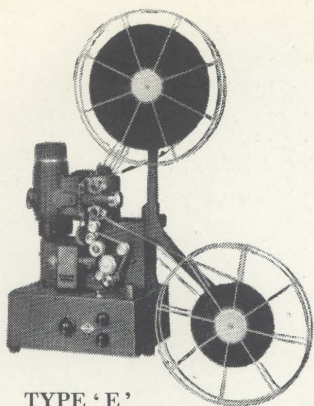
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